

TOP STORY: *Lessons learned by Head Start*

May 3 - 16, 1993

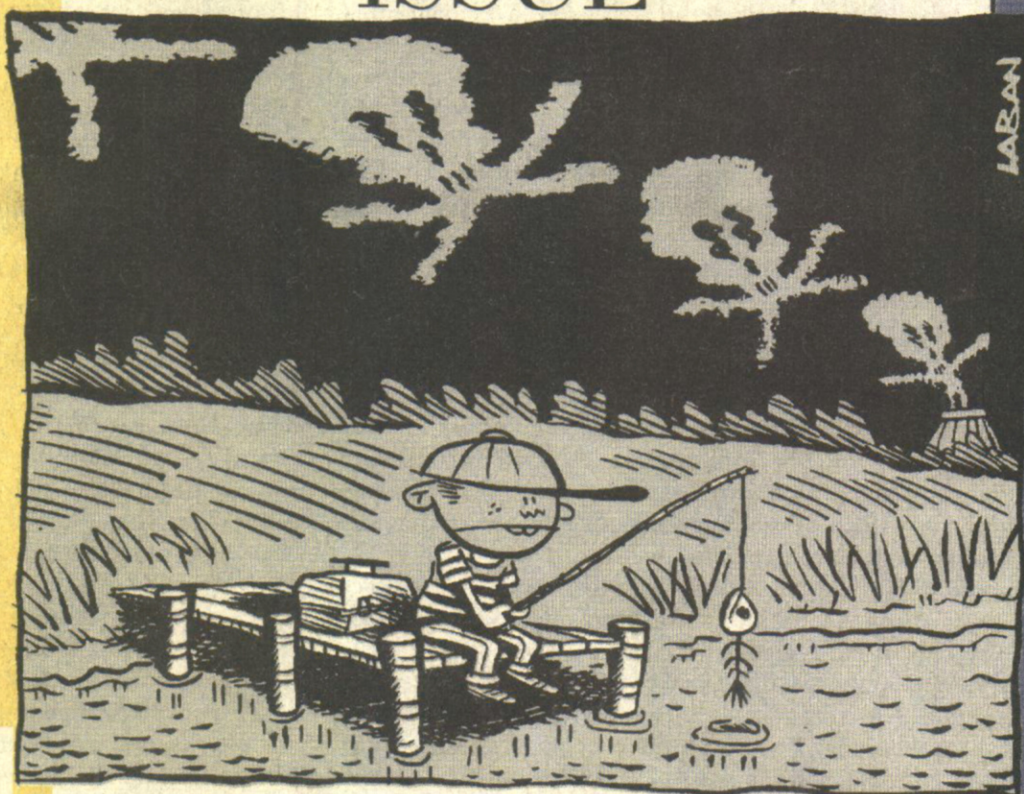
IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

“Things have already gone so far wrong in what used to be Yugoslavia that both decision and indecision carry great risks of error, injustice and catastrophe.”

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The president could ban dangerous toxic-waste incinerators.
But does he have the will?

By David Moberg

EDITORIAL

Capitalism, American-style, bombs in Russia

When Soviet Communism collapsed after the coup attempt 20 months ago, media pundits and establishment ideologues crowed that the triumph of free market capitalism was complete. In Boris Yeltsin, they believed, they now had a leader who might bring stability to Russia and cooperate with Western corporations seeking to buy up his country's patrimony. IMF advisers flocked to Moscow to offer advice on how to dismantle the old Soviet economy and create a favorable investment climate. Socialism was dead, they believed, and capitalism was the only game in town.

But, as we predicted at the time, the Russians turn out not to be too keen on capitalism, American-style. They fear, as the *New York Times* reported last week, that American-style capitalism portends "higher prices, less individual security, more unemployment, social injustice, greed and crime."

It's true, of course, that socialism, or at least "Marxism" (by which they generally mean Soviet-style Communism), is rejected out of hand by most Russians. Thus in a poll taken last year, 46 percent of Russians agreed that "Marxism is bankrupt," while only 11 percent thought it wasn't. But 44 percent also believed that capitalism was not the answer, against 19 percent who thought it was.

What, then, do the Russians want? The honest answer is that they do not know. For 70 years they lacked all the normal institutions of civil society—public forums and means of communication, free trade unions, political parties, private cultural organizations and other civic associations. True, they enjoyed many of the benefits traditionally associated with socialism—guaranteed employment; controlled prices, especially of food and housing; and free medical care and education—but under the stifling conformity and bureaucracy of a one-party state they were unable to gain the knowledge or develop the skills required to organize society on their own initiative.

Now they are busily organizing the whole range of civic associations that characterize a democratic society, but they are only at the beginning of a process that has been going on for 200 years in the United States and for 350 years in Britain. Not surprisingly, therefore, Russians know more about what they don't want their society to be than about how it should be organized.

Boris Yeltsin has been taking advice on this question from the West. He instituted more rapid reform than Mikhail Gorbachev, who lost popular support when he clung to the

Communist Party and when his version of *perestroika* caused more pain than benefits. But in Yeltsin's two years in office, he has done no better. Production has fallen 40 percent and inflation has been rampant. So, too, are fear and insecurity, not to mention rapidly increasing poverty. And Russians of all kinds increasingly resent the loss of the natural and industrial resources that were at least nominally their common property.

Those in the West who hope to benefit from the Russians' losses remain strong Yeltsin supporters. Thus in early April, prodded by the Clinton administration, the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations announced a \$28 billion aid package to Russia designed to keep Yeltsin in office. But in Russia, even before the April 25 referendum, expressions of lack of confidence in their leader were widespread. In early April, for example, in five local elections scattered around Russia, hard-line Communists won two governorships, no one was elected in two other contests because the turnout was too low (to be elected a candidate must receive the votes of at least 50 percent of those eligible to vote) and in the fifth, a tiny farming republic on the Caspian Sea, voters chose a young capitalist tycoon who promised to ban all political parties while he imposed "economic dictatorship" to usher in prosperity.

In his appeals to Russians and to the West, Yeltsin constantly warns about a return to Communism. But while his opponents share fear, resentment or hostility to what they see as a betrayal of their interests, they share little else. They are a diverse group that includes old-line Communist apparatchiks, pro-czarist nationalists, new-style democratic socialists and a variety of others. They share opposition to current policies, but they do not agree about what should be done. They represent the barest beginnings of the process of forging a modern party system in which clear ideas about the direction of society, implicit or explicit, can form the basis of a stable consensus.

Yeltsin, with his opportunistic embrace of Western ideas and policies, is clearly not the answer to Russia's problems. He cannot lead the process of creating a new society in which the benefits formerly enjoyed by the Soviet people and those of a democratic market economy are combined. But, so far at least, neither can anyone else. ◀

*Yeltsin's foes
share hostility
to his betrayal
of Russia's
patrimony, but
that's about
all they have
in common.*

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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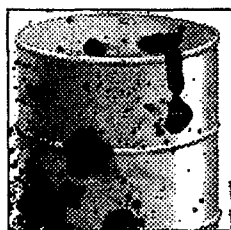
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Playing with fire
The evidence stacks up against incinerating toxic wastes.

DAVID MOBERG

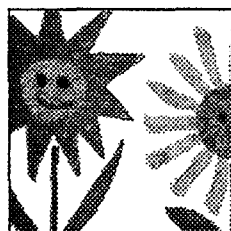
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LETTERS

One-sided tirades

Regarding your April 5 editorial: In 1937, the League of Nations presented a plan for a Jewish/Arab binational state. The Jews accepted it; the Arabs rejected it. In 1947, the United Nations proposed a binational state. Again, the Jews accepted it, the Arabs rejected it. In 1967, Israel told Jordan to stay put in the West Bank, which they had been ruling for the last 19 years. Jordan joined the war against Israel.

The Arab nations surrounding Israel have never accepted the existence of Israel and are committed to destroying Israel. The Palestinians are the abused pawns of the Arab countries. You, the editors, are apparently too mired in a myopic view based on bias and shoddy thinking to see the injustice of your continual one-sided tirades against Israel.

You want a people born of a holocaust, surrounded by would-be killers,

to give total self-determination to next-door neighbors who vacillate between driving out their neighbors or grudgingly sharing a fence with them—if their Arab nations' brethren will allow a choice.

I deplore the actions of Israeli extremists. I welcome the Palestinian moderates. I pray that the sane elements in both factions find a viable state of peace. I know that otherwise there is only disaster. I hope that the editors will come to realize that nothing in human affairs is ever black and white; reporting in that manner does them no credit.

Henry Perril
Spring Valley, N.Y.

Doomed

Your editorial in the April 5 issue contains a touching defense of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

If you are opposed to apartheid, why don't you refer to the fact that the Arab countries—all of whom defend the PLO whom you champion so forcefully—practice apartheid?

Why don't you mention the fact that only in the Jewish country of Israel do Arabs enjoy the privilege of voting, that their women have dignity, that they enjoy freedom of religion, good pay and good health conditions?

The PLO has never repudiated its declaration that Israel must be destroyed. Should the PLO and its friends of Hamas prevail, all Weinstains would be doomed, even those who, like you, ignore the concern that Israel gives to its Arab citizens and serve as defenders of a vicious organization.

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver
Delray Beach, Fla.

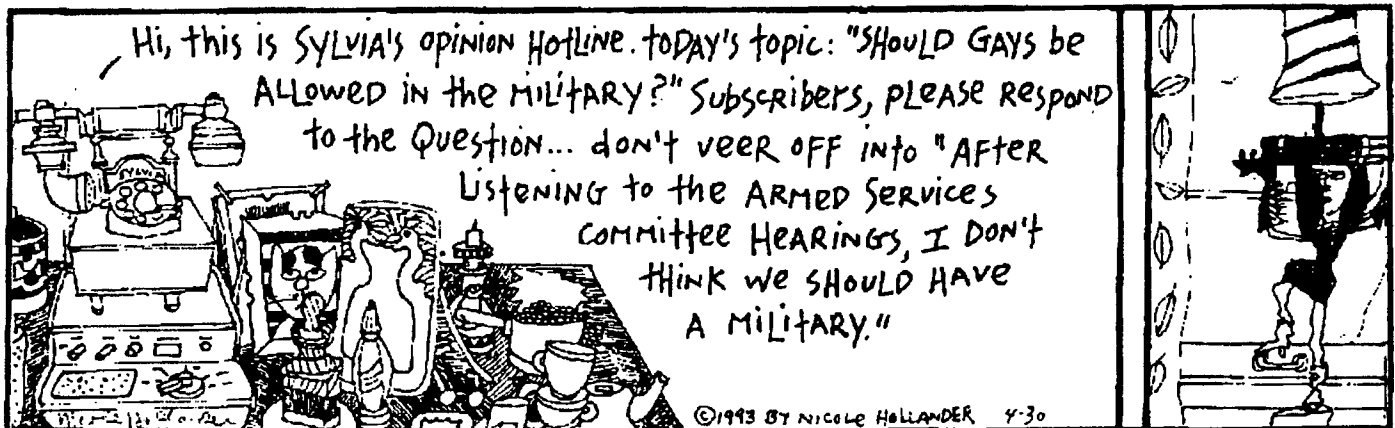
Editor's note: My editorial was no more a defense of the PLO than it was a defense of Israel.

The fact is that Israel's founders did everything they could to drive Palestinians out of Israel, and that, in return, the Palestinians did everything they could to destroy Israel. The point is to end this mutual hostility and slaughter. Doing so is as much in Israel's interest as it is in the Palestinians' interest. Neither side can enjoy a normal, peaceful existence until both sides have their basic needs met.

In this process, now nominally

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



underway, the Palestinians have shown that they are ready to compromise in order to achieve a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel has remained intransigent, against its own long-term interest.

It's easy to score debater points in arguing against accommodation, but it's also fruitless. The fact is that the PLO has given every indication that it is ready to agree to guarantees of secure borders for Israel and to peaceful coexistence, while Israel has done its best to avoid negotiations with its enemy, and has shown no intention of meeting its basic demand. That, of course, is Israel's right. But it is also our right as Americans not to continue subsidizing governments that show no genuine interest in peace.

Turning tide

ITT can be justly proud for being the first to publish Rep. Ron Dellums' vision to overhaul the national defense establishment (ITT, March 22). Dellums' philosophy is nothing short of noble, and his vision and courage are unsurpassed. For too many years I have waited to see, from a major political figure, the maturity, intelligence and wisdom Dellums exemplifies. How refreshing and hopeful! As an experienced sailor, I can see the tide is finally turning. As a Center for Defense adviser with 25 years of experience with the federal budget and the military, I agree with Rep. Dellums' assessment that \$1 trillion can be safely trimmed from the Defense Department between now and the year 2000. I pray that the need for, and wisdom of, his vigorous economic conversion program and reordering of priorities will be recognized and supported by Congress and the Clinton administration. I look forward to the "slimming effect" a leaner U.S. military budget will have on global weapons proliferation and military activities.

John Otranto
Executive Director, Global Care
Munich

Blackened out

Thanks for publishing Ron Dellums' article on his vision for the U.S. defense (ITT, March 22). I've been shocked and frustrated at how little attention Dellums is getting from the mainstream press—even though he is now chair of the House Armed Services Committee. The press and President Clinton seem to be focused on the fears and concerns of Sam Nunn, who chairs a parallel body in the Senate.

I have not seen concrete statements of Nunn's vision for the military in the post-Cold War era. Hopefully your publication of Dellums' vision will create a climate for broader discussion and debate.

As I age, I am saddened by the state of this nation. People of color have a tremendous capacity to ask new questions and examine the social and political system from different perspectives—mostly because as a group we lack racial privilege and can see racism's many manifestations. Yet white Americans persist in neglecting our perspectives. Now that an African American has achieved the position of chair of the House Armed Services Committee, is he also to be marginalized and dismissed?

The current debates about gays in the armed forces have also been narrow and the list of participants short. These debates need to be expanded to include members of different races, women as well as men, and gay men and lesbians knowledgeable about their experiences in the military.

Elizabeth Higginbotham
Memphis

Socialism through capitalism

I am responding to your editorial "Clinton's modest step toward a new America" (ITT, March 8). There is a solution to the problem you correctly perceive as looming in the future,

namely unemployment that will be prevalent as our labor force is replaced by automation. The solution is to turn the laborers into shareholders, as proposed in *Democracy and Economic Power*, by Louis O. Kelso, University Press of America.

The basic idea is to give more Americans the ability to participate in our capitalist economy. Right now, most Americans' participation is confined to being employees of corporations. The key to a healthy economic future lies in making more Americans owners of moderate amounts of capital in these corporations, thereby diversifying their source of income between labor and investment income.

1) Eliminate the double taxation on dividends paid to shareholders of corporations, which would allow most well-managed corporations to make a return on new capital investments of about 20 percent per year.

2) Institute a low-interest loan program for low- and middle-income families to help them purchase a modest amount of new capital investment, say \$75,000-\$100,000. If corporations are able to make 20 percent returns, then these loans would easily be repaid in five to 10 years. Thereafter these families would have the basis for a stable financial future.

Corporations would benefit from the increased capital resources available to them. These newly "affluent" families would also be creating more consumer demand and thus creating more jobs.

3) Legislate mechanisms whereby it would be advantageous for a corporation to finance new capital investment via issuance of stock and guarantee that a substantial portion of the earnings derived from it would be returned to the stockholders. This would guarantee a steady supply of new capital for families to own.

These are just some of the ideas needed to implement the transition from a labor-intensive economy to a capital-intensive one.

John P. Pinto
Hackensack, N.J.

InSHORT



A DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Study shows the Rodney King incident was just one of many

only thing unusual about the King beating was that it was recorded.

The study, which surveyed major national and regional newspapers for more than two years, discerned a nationwide pattern of violent assaults by

A recent University of Florida study concluded that the police beating of Rodney King is part of a nationwide pattern of violent assaults by white cops against minorities. This is not news to most black Americans. For them, the



By Woody Igou

Arson makes perfect

Three volunteer firefighters have been charged with arson



after burning five houses, a trailer and an empty building, all valued at over

\$170,000. According to investigators, the firefighters set the blazes "so they could have more experience fighting fires, and it also cleared out old, abandoned buildings." *Wouldn't it have been easier to move to Detroit?*

Eco-excess

Clean Ocean Action, a New Jersey environmental group, has manufactured and sold



more than 300 fishing lures made out of tampon applicators its members

found while cleaning up local beaches. They sell for \$6.00 each.

And don't forget the inflated condom bobber.

Hey, get off my channel

In a *New York Times* article



describing how New Age pilgrims continue to flock to the pyramids despite the recent

rise in terrorism against tourists, Ahmed Fayed, a New Age tour

guide, spoke to the phenomenon of "past lives" when he stated, "I have met over 130 Nefertitis and Cleopatras, but I have trouble knowing which one is the real one."

Not to mention the asp shortage.

Falling Down, Philippine style

Alelio Pen, the leader of a peculiar sect called the Reserved Manpower of the Good Wisdom for All Nations, recently announced on his



two-hour radio show that it was God's will to let the air out of automobile

tires. Cult members then fanned across Manila during rush-hour traffic flattening tires, terrifying motorists and causing traffic jams.

One follower stated it was "God's order to let out air." *I hope they didn't miss Imelda Marcos.*

Bobbysox withdrawal

Leigh Ann Fisher, a high school student, and her parents have filed a \$4.2 million



lawsuit for emotional distress after little Leigh Ann was

replaced as the captain of her school's cheerleading squad. This cruel act took place in Vilonia, Ark., near Little Rock. *Tort reform begins at home, Bill.*

APPAL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Is he, Pol Pot?
10. Hereperson of the Apocalypse

white police officers against minorities. "Rodney King's beating is not an isolated incident," says Joe Feagin, the University of Florida sociology professor who conducted the study. Rather, he adds, the beating revealed a "dirty little secret of racism that has been repeated again and again across this nation."

Feagin and researcher Kim Lersch used the NEXIS service to search publications from the period January 1990 to May 1992 and found a total of 130 reports of police brutality. African-Americans or Latinos were the victims in 97 percent of the brutality cases, and white police officers were centrally involved in 93 percent of the assaults, Feagin says.

"We found that the cases typically involved groups of white police officers assaulting a black or Latino," explains Lersch. "Actually, we were quite surprised by how easy the data was to collect. When people would charge that police routinely abused certain citizens, most reporters would dismiss that stuff as anecdotal. But we've got the data."

The study concluded that minorities were more likely to be victims of police brutality if they were disrespectful in their demeanor toward the officers than if they posed a deadly threat. Lersch says that police were most apt to use excessive force on motorists if they were black. "In our study, all but two brutalized motorists were black. Many of them were harassed for driving in an upscale white neighborhood, some were told they matched a wanted man's description and some were told they looked like drug dealers."

Realizing that newspaper reports are less than perfect gauges of brutality incidents, the researchers sought to compare their data with that collected by the Justice Department in its six-year review of brutality charges logged with federal agencies. The Justice Department's survey was announced by former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh in March 1991, during the first flush of outrage at the King beating videotape. Although the report has been complete for more than a year, Lersch says, the Justice Department refuses to make it available.

"We've also found that the government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars settling these brutality cases," she says. Still, she notes, the offending officers are seldom punished for their abusive behavior. —Salim Muwakkil

RAPE ON A MEXICAN BEACH

Poachers prey on turtles and biologists

Environmentalists in Mexico allege that officials in the ruling party are covering up the rapes of two biologists who were working on a sea turtle conservation project on a beach in the state of Chiapas.

The Mexican women were allegedly abducted, raped and then tortured with burning cigarettes last October 20.

Even though the young women identified one of their two attackers as Severiano Lara Hernandez, a turtle-egg poacher from whom the women had previously confiscated a huge number of contraband turtle eggs, Mexican authorities have yet to prosecute anyone for the crime. The eggs are considered a food delicacy and bring a high price on the black market.

Environmentalists claim the ruling party has been covering up the rapes—and the issue of the continuing slaughter of sea turtles—out of fear that bad publicity will damage Mexico's image and affect ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The Group of 100, an environmental organization of Mexican artists and

writers, has been trying to publicize the rapes, the lack of government action and the danger now posed to environmentalists who work in the field, but with limited success.

Homero Aridjis, the group's founder and author of 1492—*The Life and Times of Juan Cabezón de Castile*, says, "This story is completely out of the newspapers in Mexico. They don't care. The government controls most of the papers. And any news about ecology is very much controlled by the government, because it is not good for the image of Mexico."

"The biologists working in the field are now afraid," he continues. "For us, it is very frustrating and depressing to know that these kind of crimes are committed with complete impunity. The former governor of Chiapas is now the minister of the Interior in Mexico and he does nothing. The attitude by the police is that they consider it normal that women are raped. This is a constant threat against women who are biologists working in the field. It is very bad. And the smuggling and the killing and the poaching of turtles goes on. The Ministry of Fisheries is doing nothing to protect the turtles, the turtles' nesting beaches or the people working for the turtles."

Todd Steiner of Earth Island's Sea Turtle Restoration Project has been in close touch with Mexican environmentalists. "Mexico promised to protect sea turtles at a time when NAFTA was on a fast track and Mexico was pushing for fast ratification," says Steiner. "Now that the spotlight on Mexico's environmental record has dimmed along with the quick ratification of NAFTA, so has the Mexican government's resolve to enforce their newly enacted environmental laws. Sea turtles are dying, important nesting beaches are being destroyed for hotel developments and Mexican conservationists on the front line are under attack."

Steiner says Earth Island and its Mexican counterparts will continue to monitor Mexico's environmental record. He adds, "We will make sure that our Congress doesn't ratify a NAFTA agreement that will cause further environmental deterioration in either country."

—Joel Bleifuss

DRESSED FOR FAILURE

A U.S. firm is taking the shirts off Guatemalan workers' backs

Consumers can help underpaid and abused Guatemalan workers trying to organize unions with a letter or telephone call to Phillips-Van Heusen, the world's largest shirtmakers, according to the U.S./Guatemala Labor Education Project (US/GLEP). Phillips-Van Heusen markets shirts and other clothing through their own retail outlets, as well as through J.C. Penney, L.L. Bean and Lands' End.

Two years ago workers started organizing a union in two of Phillips-Van Heusen's Guatemalan *maquila* factories, which produce only for export and receive favorable tariff considerations from the United States. The *maquilas* make up the fastest growing sector of the Guatemalan economy, but until recently most workers were paid around \$1 a day. Union supporters were physically threatened, and one woman organizer was shot and wounded in the head, almost certainly in retribution for her union work.

US/GLEP's campaign in the United States to mobilize labor, religious and other groups against Phillips-Van Heusen's labor practices resulted in improvement of working conditions, a raise in the official minimum wage

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Full disclosure

Alcohol advertising may soon be accompanied by a Surgeon General's warning about health dangers. The government has long required such warnings in tobacco advertising, but until now alcohol manufacturers were only required to put these labels on the products themselves. Legislation in both houses of Congress calls for TV, radio and print ads all to carry health warnings. Advertisers are furious, and have concocted dire scenarios. The "Media Beat" favorite: The legislation could lead to fewer ads on sports events. This in turn could force sports programming onto pay cable channels, on which subscription could cover costs but not everybody could watch. If you ever wondered what the *sine qua non* for cultural democracy is, now you know: advertising.

The other shoe drops

Finally, the fin-syn (financial interest and syndication) battle winds up. For almost two decades, producers and TV networks have fought before regulators over who should control the programming on television. Networks have long been banned from owning all but a token amount of their programming, as a hedge against vertical integration and centralization. Increasingly, though, lines between producers and distributors have fallen. At the same time, networks have lost chunks of audience to cabled, to video and to Fox, which wasn't big enough to be subject to the

rules. Fox, meanwhile, wanted to be able to grow bigger without being fin-synned.

In early April, the battle of the lobbyists was settled. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) finally let TV networks own and syndicate (by 1995) their own shows, making networks into producers. Fox won big, and producers pouted. A Disney spokesperson said the ruling turns networks "into the OPEC of the airwaves." Hollywood's independent producers are worried—with cause—that they'll become pawns of the networks.

Huge sums of money are at stake in the change, but most of them flow between parties that are already fabulously wealthy. The truly independent voices never had much of a chance at the fin-synned networks, and their chances aren't improved by the changes.

No free lunch

The cable industry is now under an elaborate network of price regulations, to be enforced by the FCC. One small problem, though—the FCC hasn't got the budget to do the job. Interim FCC chair James Quello is suggesting that cable companies, or more accurately, their subscribers, pay the estimated \$16.1 million a year for enforcement. That would come out to about 31 cents a customer. But that's not such a bad deal, considering that the price controls will lower costs by a total of \$1 billion this year.

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for the *maquilas* from \$7 to \$21 a week and government recognition of the union last fall. Although many *maquilas* still do not pay the minimum wage, Phillips-Van Heusen has raised its workers' wages and promised to respect the law protecting workers' right to organize.

Yet earlier this year, US/GLEP director Stephen Coats reports, factory managers began denouncing union members as communists, charges often "interpreted by right-wing forces as a license to kill" union supporters. Union members were also threatened in other ways, and the company formed a *solidarismo* organization—essentially a company-controlled union—and required newly hired workers to join it. Phillips-Van Heusen also contracts work to a Korean-owned *maquila*, East-West, where workers are routinely physically and sexually abused, union supporters are fired and dreadful working conditions prevail, Coats says. East-West supplies Wal-Mart, The Gap, Sears, the Arnold Palmer clothing line, Jordache and Bon Jour.

The Phillips-Van Heusen union is trying to mobilize support among workers in the two Guatemalan factories in anticipation of bargaining for its first contract, but Phillips-Van Heusen has reportedly threatened to close its Guatemalan plants. US/GLEP's pressure on the company has been helpful: the communist accusations have reportedly declined, and the company is supposedly withdrawing work from East-West (although US/GLEP would have preferred that the company would have pressured East-West to reform).

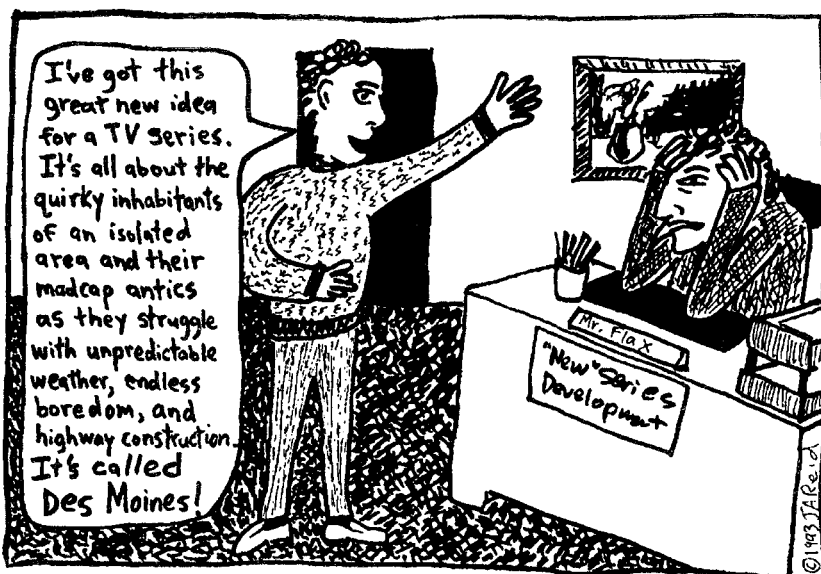
The Guatemalan factories are part of Phillips-Van Heusen's rapid expansion of production in Central America and the Caribbean in recent years. Government recognition of Phillips-Van Heusen's Guatemalan union—the first in the *maquila* sector in six years—was an important victory. Yet it is tenuous, because workers do not have a contract, and the company may still close the plant or return to earlier threatening tactics.

The campaign for worker rights "is right on the edge now," Coats says. "It could go forward or go back," depending in large part on how Phillips-Van Heusen responds.

—David Moberg

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid





CHILD CARES

James Garbarino searches for the secret of the resilient child

shooting starts, it's her job to find her little sister and haul her into the bathtub. He asks Carl, a boy of nine, what would make him feel safer. The child replies, "A gun of my own." Another little boy in another housing project responds to Garbarino's time-honored question like this: "If I grow up," the child says, "I'd like to be a bus driver."

These children and children like them around the world are the all-consuming passion of Jim Garbarino, a seemingly dispassionate 46-year-old academic who presides over the Erikson Institute, a center for graduate study in child development associated with Loyola University in Chicago. Garbarino spends much of his time listening to these children and then re-telling their horror stories. But he does so with hope rather than despair. Garbarino has an unshakable faith in the resilience of the child, the innate ability to heal, if only some

James Garbarino tells the story of Annie, a six-year-old girl he met recently at Kennedy Manor, a housing project in Richmond, Calif. She told him that when the

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Sex and sickness

A new report claims that, given current rates, at least one in four—and perhaps as many as one in two—Americans will contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD) at some point in their lives. Despite this threat, federal funding to battle non-HIV STDs decreased by 23 percent (when inflation is taken into account) between fiscal year 1950 and fiscal year 1992. And although women are hardest hit by STDs, the federal program designed to combat such diseases is geared toward services and clinics that primarily serve men.

The report, "Testing Positive: Sexually Transmitted Disease and the Public Health Response," is authored by Patricia Donovan of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, an independent policy-analysis organization in New York. Donovan writes that "STDs have a disproportionate impact on women because [these diseases] are more easily transmitted to [women] and more difficult to diagnose in women than men. Moreover, complications of undiagnosed infections are far more common and severe in women."

The report notes that many of the nation's 4,000 STD clinics are overcrowded; in some areas, as many as 25 percent of those seeking services are sent home. Of those making it in the door, two-thirds are male. This is due in part to the fact that many STD-infected women have either no symptoms or no recognizable symptoms. Instead, women tend to find



out about their STDs from family-planning clinics, where they are routinely tested for such diseases. The report calls for more federal funding of these clinics—and more funding in general to combat the crisis.

Concludes the report: "Given the dimensions of the STD problem, Congress will have to increase funding levels substantially if it is genuinely committed to reducing the toll of STDs."

Good old boys

Another new study from the Alan Guttmacher Institute surveyed more than 3,000 men about their sexual behavior and condom use. It found that black men are almost twice as likely to use condoms for birth control and disease prevention than are white men. And white men, Hispanic men and highly educated men are more likely to be embarrassed about buying condoms than other men. Only 27 percent of the men surveyed considered important their partner's preference about what type of condom to use.

adult support can be found.

Traveling from one war-ravaged country to another, Garbarino has searched for the secret of the resilient child, the one who manages to survive and grow. He has heard the stories of children who have endured chronic brutality. In Cambodia he found the most remarkable survivors, people who have endured the unspeakable atrocities of Pol Pot's killing fields and yet somehow managed to grow to adulthood, able to heal themselves and care for others. Living well, these survivors told Garbarino, is the best revenge, the only way to honor all those who have been lost.

At home in the inner city of Chicago, Garbarino looks in vain for this kind of psychological and spiritual resource for children or for the adults who care for them.

In the spring of 1988, after Laurie Dann went on a killing spree at Hubbard Woods School in Winnetka, Ill., the community was besieged with counselors and psychologists. These resources are rarely available to inner-city children who witness violence on a daily basis. Those who need the most, says Garbarino, get the least. His life's work is to redress this imbalance.

To that end, he has tried to create programs that will do something to close the "tremendous gap." Their focus is to provide adult caregivers with the support they need to help children overcome the developmental toll of inner-city life.

"It's not impossible," he says, as if thinking aloud. "It's the only thing that makes sense." At the same time, he doesn't deny the larger reality, the overwhelming need for massive resources to be redirected toward the creation of jobs and economic opportunity. The problem, he says, must be approached from all sides at once, and progress on any front will add to the momentum.

Lately, according to Garbarino, funding sources have opened up, making it possible to launch a teacher-training program at 50 schools in Chicago. He says it is auspicious that the Children's Defense Fund, which shares Garbarino's priorities, is "wired" into the White House. And he notes with some satisfaction that his recent book, *Children in Danger*, was passed around and read on the Clinton-Gore campaign bus.

Garbarino sees his current work with children who live in multi-risk environments as the culmination of a lifetime concern for children in the midst of social and political upheaval.

Garbarino himself grew up in a housing project in New York City, the son of an Italian immigrant who served as an American soldier in World War II and an Englishwoman from the Royal Air Force. He spent a year in graduate school in political science at Cornell, but quit after a black student uprising made it apparent to him that the department of government was the most inept of all. He taught junior high school for a year, until a mentor from his days as a summer camp counsellor steered him toward graduate school in human development.

Garbarino's demanding professional life makes it difficult for him to find enough time for his own family. This, he concedes, is a "big issue." He's out of town weekly from September to June. But the Institute runs on an academic calendar, and it's an "implicit" part of the familial social contract that the months of July and August are spent at a remote family retreat in upstate New York. Here the big event of the day is the canoe trip to get the mail. And so the domestic fabric is "knit together" again, to withstand the strain of the longer part of the year when Garbarino turns his attention to the rest of the world's children.

—Susan Kimmelman

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

SPECIAL SAUCE, EXTRA HORMONES

By Joel Bleifuss

“What a difference a hamburger can make!” exalts the *Adopt-A-McDonald's Coloring Book*. “By not eating a hamburger this week I helped save our Earth.” For those who aren’t aware, the Earth’s ozone layer is threatened by the methane gas from farting cows, or “hoofed locusts” as Jeremy Rifkin calls them. Rifkin is the author of *Beyond Beef* and the instigator of the Adopt-A-McDonald’s campaign.

The six-week campaign kicked off on April 17 and will culminate at the May 28 shareholders’ meeting at McDonald’s Hamburger U. in Oak Brook, Ill. Until then, some 1,700 teams of Beyond Beef pamphleteers will spread the anti-beef word at McDonald’s fast-food feedlots across North America. According to the coloring book, in addition to saving the Earth, giving up that hamburger can help save forests, starving people, wild animals, cows and your health.

It is not quite so simple, but, hyperbole aside, a strong case can be made on environmental, ethical, economic and health grounds against both the beef industry and the primacy of red meat in Western diets. And if beef cattle are a plague on the land, McDonald’s, with its 85 billion sold, is a scourge on society. Each year the corporation spends about \$1 billion on advertising to attract the estimated 9 percent of U.S. citizens who chow down each day under the Golden Arches. Further, for 7 percent of Americans, their first job is, you guessed it, at McDonald’s. The current hourly wage for this legion of part-time burger flippers equals two Big Macs—\$4.25—an hour.

McDonald’s has responded to the Beyond Beef PR assault by issuing a so-called fact sheet to its franchise owners and operators. “Beyond Beef may try to fool you into signing a ‘Good Neighbor Policy’ petition,” said McDonald’s. “This petition is not what it seems: if you sign it, you’re supporting this activist group’s anti-meat agenda, and nothing more!” The fact sheet then quotes Dennis Avery, a fellow at the right-wing Hudson Institute of Indianapolis, who explains that Rifkin is “a professional activist who makes his living scaring people.” Says Avery, “Rifkin is anti-technology, anti-capitalism and anti-progress, and his strong beliefs about how society should function put him in a small minority of people with extreme views.”

Rifkin’s Adopt-A-McDonald’s campaign is making three demands of the fast-food behemoth. First, that McDonald’s offer its customers a vegetarian hamburger, like it does at its Dutch franchises. Second, that the

company devote 25 percent of its advertising budget to promote this beef-less alternative. And third, that McDonald’s make a public pledge that it will not buy milk or meat products that come from cattle injected with genetically engineered bovine growth hormone, otherwise known as BGH. On March 31, the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee put its stamp of approval on BGH. A final ruling by the FDA is expected soon.

When injected into dairy cattle this Monsanto product dramatically increases milk production. Monsanto’s drug also has side effects, but, according to the Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee, they are of no consequence.

First, the committee acknowledged that the artificial growth hormone dramatically increases the incidence of mastitis, an infection of a cow’s teats. Treatment of these infections requires infusions of antibiotics. These antibiotics—along with the artificial growth hormone—then end up in the milk and milk products sold to consumers. The Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee is of the opinion that these growth hormones and antibiotics present an “insignificant risk to human health.”

However, failure to gain FDA approval to market BGH poses a significant risk to Monsanto, which has invested hundreds of millions of dollars developing this product. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, last year Monsanto had to discard \$30 million of its BGH stockpile because the hormone had rotted on the shelf.

The truth is that BGH is unneeded, untested and udderly undesirable.

The great majority of the nation's dairy farmers don't want the product approved since there is already a milk surplus—a surplus that costs U.S. taxpayers hundreds of millions each year in milk subsidy payments. According to Consumer's Union, if BGH were widely used, in two years these payments might top \$1.9 billion.

It is not known what effect ingesting milk from hormone-treated cows has on humans, particularly children. No relevant studies have been conducted. For this reason, among others, BGH is currently banned by the European Community. BGH residue itself probably has no effect on people. However, milk from hormone-treated cows contains another hormone, insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), which is identical in cows and humans. The potential health impact of ingesting milk with elevated levels of IGF-1 is unknown. Further, another unknown is the risk posed by ingesting the increased antibiotic residues that will indirectly result from use of BGH.

However, as things now stand, Americans will never know if the milk their children are drinking contains synthetic BGH. If this drug wins FDA approval as anticipated, the FDA does not plan to require that milk and beef products containing BGH be labeled as such. However, an unnamed senior Clinton administration official told Gregory Racz of the *Wall Street Journal* that although BGH approval falls under FDA purview, the Clinton administration will decide whether BGH-tainted food is labeled or not. Every consumer survey on this issue indicates that most people will not buy food they know contains BGH.

So what does BGH have going for it? For one thing, it has the support of chemical and pharmaceutical lobbyists and the political clout of Monsanto and other corporate giants like Eli Lilly, American Cyanamid and Upjohn, which also have their own growth hormone products waiting in the wings. For another, BGH continues to benefit from the residual effect of the Reagan revolution. Said one close observer of the FDA, "The [FDA's] Center for Veterinary Medicine [which handled BGH] has been gutted in 12 years of Reagan-Bush. It is filled with industry hacks. Animal drugs are completely unregulated."

John Stauber, national organizer of the Pure Food Campaign, says BGH approval involves issues greater than the drug itself. "As the first \$1 billion product of genetic engineering, BGH has tremendous symbolic importance," says

Stauber. "It is setting many precedents regarding the approval and acceptance of genetically engineered food products. For example, the issue of whether or not the milk will be labeled is of crucial importance to both the biotechnology industry and consumers. The biotech industry opposes labeling, while, from our point of view, consumers have a right to know if the food they are eating is a product of genetic engineering. If the FDA mandates that BGH-treated milk be labeled, it would seem logical that genetically engineered whole fruits and vegetables should also be labeled."

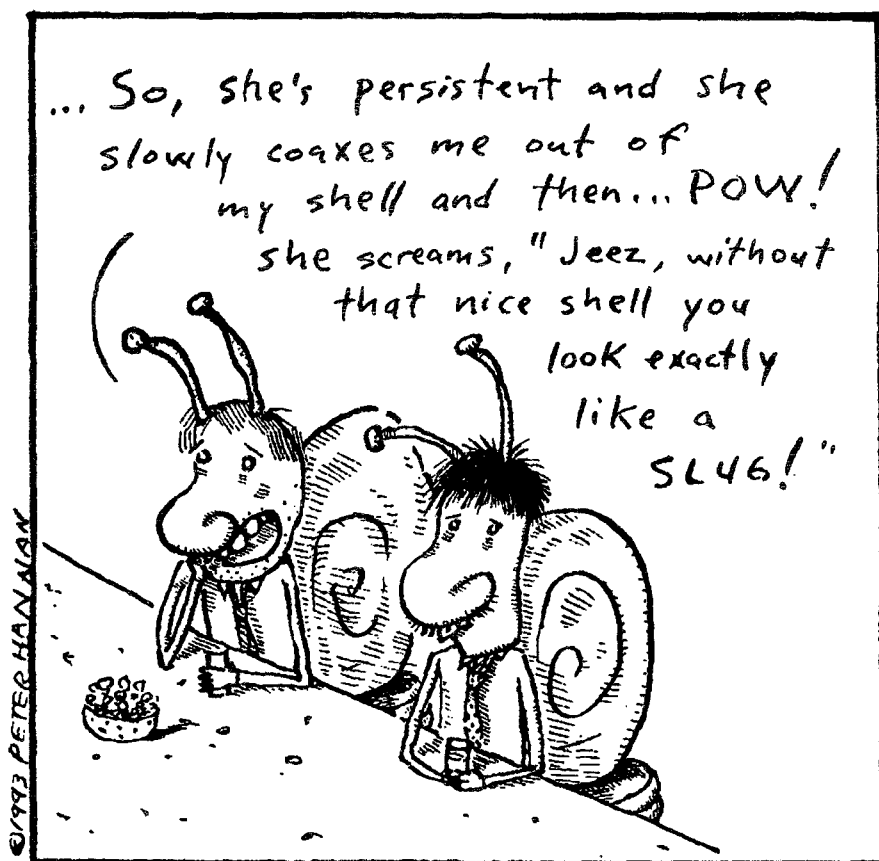
McDonald's is the logical site to wage this battle. About 36 percent of all fast-food hamburgers are made from cows culled from dairy herds. Dairy beef is already the most antibiotic-contaminated meat on the market and if BGH is introduced on a large scale, the levels of antibiotics will rise. Consequently, if BGH is approved with no labeling requirements, McDonald's would be the largest single restaurant source of meat and dairy products from cattle treated with BGH.

"We have McDonald's in a tight position," says Ronnie Cummins, Adopt-A-McDonald's spokesman. "Consumers don't want BGH or antibiotics in their food. It is not in McDonald's best interests to have public attention focused on their beef patties."

Next issue: Even more disturbing news about beef.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



THE BALKANS

We are all Serbo-Croats

If we label whole ethnic groups as "good" or "bad," then we ourselves are infected by nationalism and are no longer in a position to stop it.

By Diana Johnstone

In the inevitable debate over how to stop the fratricidal war in what used to be Yugoslavia, we are all joined together in a community of perplexity. We are all aghast at what is happening and fear that worse is to come. Given that the "worse to come" is likely to be hastened by misguided efforts to solve the problem, appalled speechlessness is as honorable a reaction as any to this tragedy.

Things have already gone so far wrong that both decision and indecision carry great risks of error, injustice and catastrophe. Admitting there are no easy answers, I would like to suggest the following set of principles to help evaluate proposals aimed at making peace.

First and foremost, outsiders seeking to promote peace must be rigorously fair to all the people and peoples caught up in the conflict.

This principle must never be forgotten.

I suggest the slogan, "We are all Serbo-Croats," meaning that we reject all claims to ethnic cleanliness or collective moral purity and remain conscious of the instability of collective identities and of the contradictory potentials in each individual. To be peacemakers, while clearly condemning all the ghastly crimes committed, we must care for all the peoples plunged into this tragic conflict. If instead we label whole national or ethnic groups as "good" or "bad," then we ourselves are infected by nationalism and are no longer in a position to stop it.

Every nationalism stimulates others. Even the momentarily "good" nationalism—because it's relatively harmless—stimulates both its rivals and its own worst side, which may emerge later on.

Peacemakers on the outside must give priority to supporting peacemakers on the inside.

This follows logically from the first principle. It is the course that has been pursued by a number of peace movements in Europe (such as the Helsinki Citizens Assembly) and those European Greens (notably the Italian Alexander Langer and the Austrian Marijana Grandits) who have supported the "Verona Forum." This support urgently needs to be broadened and intensified.

Each course of action should be examined with this in mind: will it strengthen the peacemakers or deepen their isolation?

Historical analogies should be drawn with caution and never allowed to obscure the facts.

Since most people outside the region know more about the rise of Nazism and World War II than about the recent history of the Balkans, there is a strong tendency to fall back on analogies with the former when discussing the latter. It has become common to compare Milosevic to Hitler and Serbia to Nazi Germany. This arouses the emotions of people both inside and outside the countries involved in ways more likely to perpetuate than to end the conflict. Indeed, seeing everything in terms of World War II helped trigger the conflict. Serbian nationalists identified Croatian separatists with the fascist Ustashe who ran the murderous Croatian puppet state sponsored by the Nazis, and interpreted insistent German backing for Croatian independence as a step toward the Fourth Reich.

For outsiders, the analogy pushes to one side many crucial facts, such as the role of Tito's last constitution in dividing Yugoslavia into republics that became separate Communist Party fiefdoms, whose leaders converted to nationalism to save their power bases from the collapse of communist ideology. If Serbs themselves want to compare Milosevic to Hitler, that is fair enough. But exaggerated polemics from

relatively ignorant outsiders risk pushing Serbs toward a shared sense of desperate, misunderstood isolation. Equating little Serbia to Germany, the industrial powerhouse of Europe, as a threat to the world is necessarily overdrawn. There is a madness loose in Serbia that risks spreading far and wide, but to grasp the nature of this danger it is better to look eastward today than back to Germany in 1939.

The outside world should help find a settlement that takes into account the future welfare of all the peoples of the former Yugoslavia.

The application of this principle is the most difficult of all, of course, because it cuts to the heart of the matter. If, a mere two years ago, the European Community (EC) had thrown its prestige and economic weight behind an overall settlement, it is quite possible that the catastrophe could have been averted. Many people in the Yugoslav republics hoped "Europe" would come to the rescue. What was needed was sponsorship of negotiations to revise the whole Yugoslav Federation on a new political basis, sweetening the sacrifices required with an economic association package provided by the EC for all the new secession states.

But the EC never offered any carrot, instead brandishing the stick in a dilatory fashion. In rushing to recognize Croatian and later Bosnian independence over protests from Serb inhabitants, the West seemed to forget that secession without negotiation is usually a *casus belli*, as the U.S. Civil War illustrated. The EC has lost credibility as the situation has become ever more hopeless. Nevertheless, something that should have been done long ago remains paramount: A process of consultation and negotiation to find territorial and political solutions enabling the inhabitants of this complicated region to live side by side, as they have always done and will always have to do short of exterminating each other.

Interim or final settlements should look to the future rather than be used to settle scores with the past. This means that acts of war should neither be rewarded nor punished by territorial settlements. Punishment of war crimes should be pursued on the basis of individual or hierarchic responsibility. The purpose of territorial and political solutions must be to allow people to go on living

where they choose and to ensure future peace, not to exact collective punishment. Otherwise, the cycle of vengeance will continue.

Policy decisions must determine the choice of means to enforce them, not the other way around.

After the first principle, this needs to be stressed most urgently, since public debate has centered much more on whether or not to use military means than on what such means would be intended to accomplish.

In fact, from the start, outsiders have neglected the search for solutions in favor of debate over means: recognition, sanctions, military force. The upshot of this is intervention with no clear concept of its outcome. Since nothing seems to work, more means are called for.

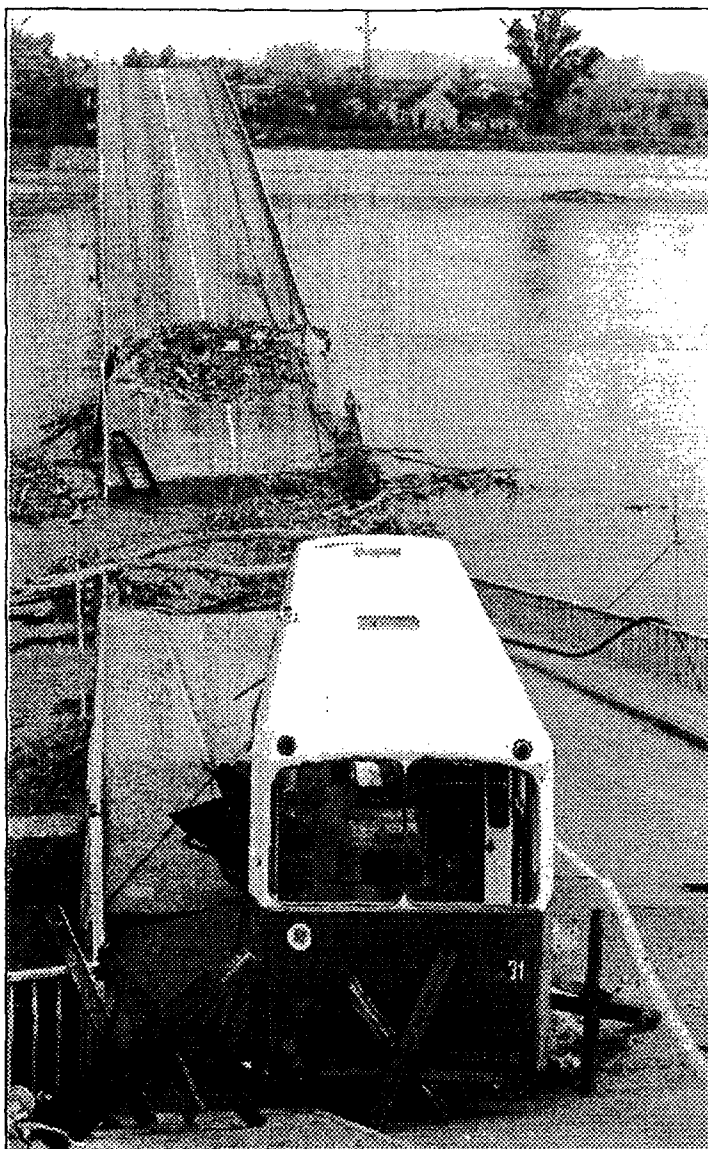
Thus policy is being determined by the choice of means rather than the other way around.

The process is all too clear. The horrors of this war are visible to people in Europe and America on their nightly newscasts, and the clamor to do something is rising. Political leaders consult their military commanders, who warn them that ground intervention would mean heavy casualties.

So there remains the good old American option of aerial bombardment. There would be few U.S. or NATO casualties. Military spokesmen could announce the success of their missions. The public would know that we didn't just stand by and do nothing.

This would result in a policy of utmost simplicity: identify the "enemy" and then wipe him out.

There is a curious psychological parallel between the



A destroyed bridge
across the Drava River in
Osijek, Croatia.



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Unearthing a mass Muslim grave in Bosnia. nationalist madness in ex-Yugoslavia and the reaction in the West. The link is television.

As Yugoslavia was breaking up, the newly nationalist authorities in both Serbia and Croatia began using their state television to whip up fear of their neighbor. Serbian television trotted out images of the massacres perpetrated against Serbs by the fascist Ustashe during World War II. Once the fighting began, each side used gruesome images to portray the other as barbarians. Fear and loathing were created and fanned.

The startlingly archaic nature of this ethnic Balkan war should not blind us to the very contemporary features that can make it a harbinger of more to come. TV images move people to demand action (by others, usually) that can also be transmitted by television. There is something built into the media form that begs more for spectacular retribution than for long-term justice.

This dismay aroused by the suffering in Bosnia is such that even longtime peace movement leaders are calling for various forms of military intervention. Personally, I am not absolutely opposed to any and all military intervention, but

I would strongly caution against any intervention whose political purpose is not crystal clear and in harmony with the principles listed above.

Two recent proposals do not, in my opinion, stand up to close scrutiny.

The first, advocated by Joanne Landy and Thomas Harrison of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy (see "Letters," April 19), proposes lifting the arms embargo to enable the Bosnians to arm themselves for a "just defense." "We think the Bosnians still have a fighting chance to win; but even if a Serb victory were inevitable, Bosnians would still have the right to defend themselves," they wrote in a recent "War Report." Helping them exercise their right to resist genocide is a "moral imperative," according to Landy and Harrison.

What does it mean to say that "the Bosnians have a fighting chance to win"? Landy and Harrison know that Croats, Serbs and Muslims who live in Bosnia are all "Bosnian" and always have been. Indeed, until 1971 Serbs were the largest single ethnic group in Bosnia. There is absolutely no linguistic or racial difference between the Serbs and the Muslims. They have shared towns and villages for centuries, although

the Serbs tend to be more rural than the Muslims.

So when Landy and Harrison call for arming the "Bosnians," I assume they mean all the people of Bosnia who reject its division into ethnic ghettos. The problem is that such people are largely concentrated in urban centers from which they can scarcely expect to recapture the Serb- and Croat-held rural areas. In fact, arming "the Bosnians" is likely to strengthen not the non-sectarian men, women and children, who never wanted to fight in the first place, but rather the Muslim militia. It would be more in line with the aims of peacemaking to provide outside protection to the remaining multi-ethnic centers than to contribute to militarization along ethnic lines.

Moreover, there is plenty of weaponry already in Bosnia, which was the arsenal of the former Yugoslavia, designed to be the center of guerrilla resistance to any invasion. Therefore, lifting the arms embargo would mean not merely a quantitative but, above all, a qualitative escalation toward more destructive weapons. Even so, the Bosnian Muslims would be unlikely to "win" without outside help. Recognizing this, Landy and Harrison suggest that, in addition to providing weapons, the U.S. and others could, "if asked by the Bosnians, bomb Serbian artillery positions."

In short, lifting the embargo would be a step toward U.S. and NATO involvement, via a tacit alliance with Muslim forces who would call for further help. Meanwhile, it would prolong the killing between ethnic communities, piling up more causes for vengeance on all sides.

The second proposal was advocated by *In These Times* Eastern European correspondent Paul Hockenos last October 28. He wrote that "a full-scale, international military intervention ... is the only alternative that remains to halt the barbarism enveloping the entire Balkans. A quick decisive invasion of Bosnia-Herzegovina—on the scale of Operation Desert Storm—is an option that the left should rally around as forcefully as any issue since opposition to the Vietnam War."

This proposal has the advantage over the first of assuming full responsibility from the start for the military action deemed necessary. The trouble with it is that it is based on a misleading fantasy about how such a war would be played out.

Reasonable opposition to the use of military force is founded not only on the view that war is immoral, but also that it is an extraordinarily unpredictable and messy method that usually causes more trouble than it resolves. Peacemaking is a much more fragile and understaffed activity, and this is no time to abandon it to join the ranks of the champions of military means.

At this stage, the conversion of peacemakers to the use of force in order "to win" would only be interpreted as a sign of unanimous popular support for whatever the U.S. chiefs of staff decide is feasible. What they would decide is clear: bomb.

Leaving aside the myths about "surgical strikes," the imprecision of aerial bombardment is notorious and always

has one extremely significant political effect: it unites the bombarded population against those doing the bombing. By the same token, the decision to bomb entails identifying the targeted country as "the enemy." Since bombing is an activity with enormous support in industry and the Pentagon ever since World War II, the military industrial complex has consistently overrated its strategic effectiveness and underplayed the adverse political effect of uniting the bombed "enemy" and prolonging its resistance. We know this was the case with the British when bombed by the Nazis; we are less aware that this is always the case.

It is highly likely to be the case with Serbs, who have a cherished self-image of heroic resistance against great odds, and who recall that, because of their resistance, Belgrade was bombed by the Nazis. The fact that the Western allies chose the anniversary of that bombing to recognize the independence of Bosnia—thus, in Serb eyes, partitioning their homeland only a couple of years after celebrating the end of the partition of the homeland of the Germans—and that German forces have chosen the skies over Bosnia for their first military operation since World War II, will only make it harder for the Serbian peace movement to oppose Milosevic and even more dangerous nationalist extremists such as Vojislav Seselj.

Once begun, the bombing would likely escalate because it wouldn't end the sort of conflict tearing Bosnia apart.

Because the war in Bosnia is a civil war, it cannot be stopped as one would stop a foreign invasion. Aside from the volunteer assistance of pathological killers flocking to join the bloodshed from other regions, much of the Serb militia in Bosnia is made up of rough local men with a proud tradition as armed farmer-soldiers guarding the frontiers of Christendom from the Islamic Ottoman Empire. They are incomparably more at home than were Sherman's troops when they went marching through Georgia. They are even more at home than the Croatian army that openly invaded southwestern Herzegovina to carve out a Croat "republic" in traditionally Croat-populated areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The sight of NATO forces, with German participation, bombing Serbian targets, inevitably maiming Serbian women and children, would start the image-indignation-retribution spiral turning in Russia. Given the current state of moral confusion of that humiliated great nation—with its superpower status eliminated except as an arsenal of nuclear weapons it can't afford to dismantle—there is no telling

*Interim or final
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where this would lead. World War III could still begin, like the first one, in Sarajevo.

This is another important reason to insist on the political clarity of any military action undertaken. It must not appear to be "taking sides" but rather be a precise and even-handed move to protect the innocent and promote long-range reconciliation between populations. One military action that might fit these criteria would be to send United Nations ground forces (without Germans) to protect the main surviving multi-ethnic centers in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sarajevo and Tuzla. Tuzla never voted for any of the three ethnic parties, Serb, Muslim or Croat, but has maintained a laic spirit of equal citizenship for all.

The Vance-Owen negotiations, like the West in general, have neglected the non-sectarian citizenry in favor of the ethnic warlords. The massive influx of

Muslim refugees into Tuzla is putting terrible strains on the city's interethnic harmony. Keeping the city safe, providing for its refugees and showing political recognition for the multicultural nature of Tuzla would be a constructive and symbolic action.

Such a military action would be limited, precisely defined and carried out on the ground. This is the catch: there is no effective military help that does not involve sharing the risk. It can't be done by arming others, or from the air.

Meanwhile, American peace activists should work with Americans of Serb and Croat extraction to keep alive the idea that "we are all Serbo-Croats" in order to counter the rightist exile groups that have heavily funded extreme nationalists in Croatia.

The potential for constructive American intervention may hinge on its own success as a multi-ethnic society. ◀

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E N V I R O N M E N T

Clinton's burning issue

W

aste Technologies Industries (WTI) took its new East Liverpool, Ohio, hazardous-waste incinerator for a driver's test in March. It failed one of three key tests on whether it could adequately destroy chemicals designated for the "trial burns" that are required before incinerators can operate. Yet in early April both the U.S. and Ohio Environmental Protection Agencies gave the plant conditional approval to begin commercial operations.

This was merely the latest in a long line of questionable moves by regulators during the conflicted 13-year history of a plant designed to burn 60,000 tons of hazardous wastes each year. Environmental laws and regulations have been bent or ignored entirely dozens of times to permit WTI to build a \$165 million incinerator that is not needed and badly sited. It sits on the banks of the Ohio River, near a school and residential

area, in a valley where emissions could often be trapped by climactic inversions.

Yet fights against WTI, as the subsidiary of the Swiss firm, Von Roll, is known, as well as a Jacksonville, Ark., incinerator have spotlighted new evidence showing that such incinerators pose a greater health hazard than previously thought. That evidence was strong enough to persuade federal district court judges in Ohio and Arkansas to order halts to operations of both incinerators, although their injunctions have for the moment been lifted by federal appellate courts. The Vertac incinerator in Arkansas is licensed to burn only waste from a polluted Superfund site, but WTI can burn waste from nearly any source.

Despite this new information and hopes that Bill Clinton and Al Gore would usher in a new day of environmental responsibility, the administration is continuing the permissive Reagan-Bush policy on hazardous incineration. Clinton spokespersons portray

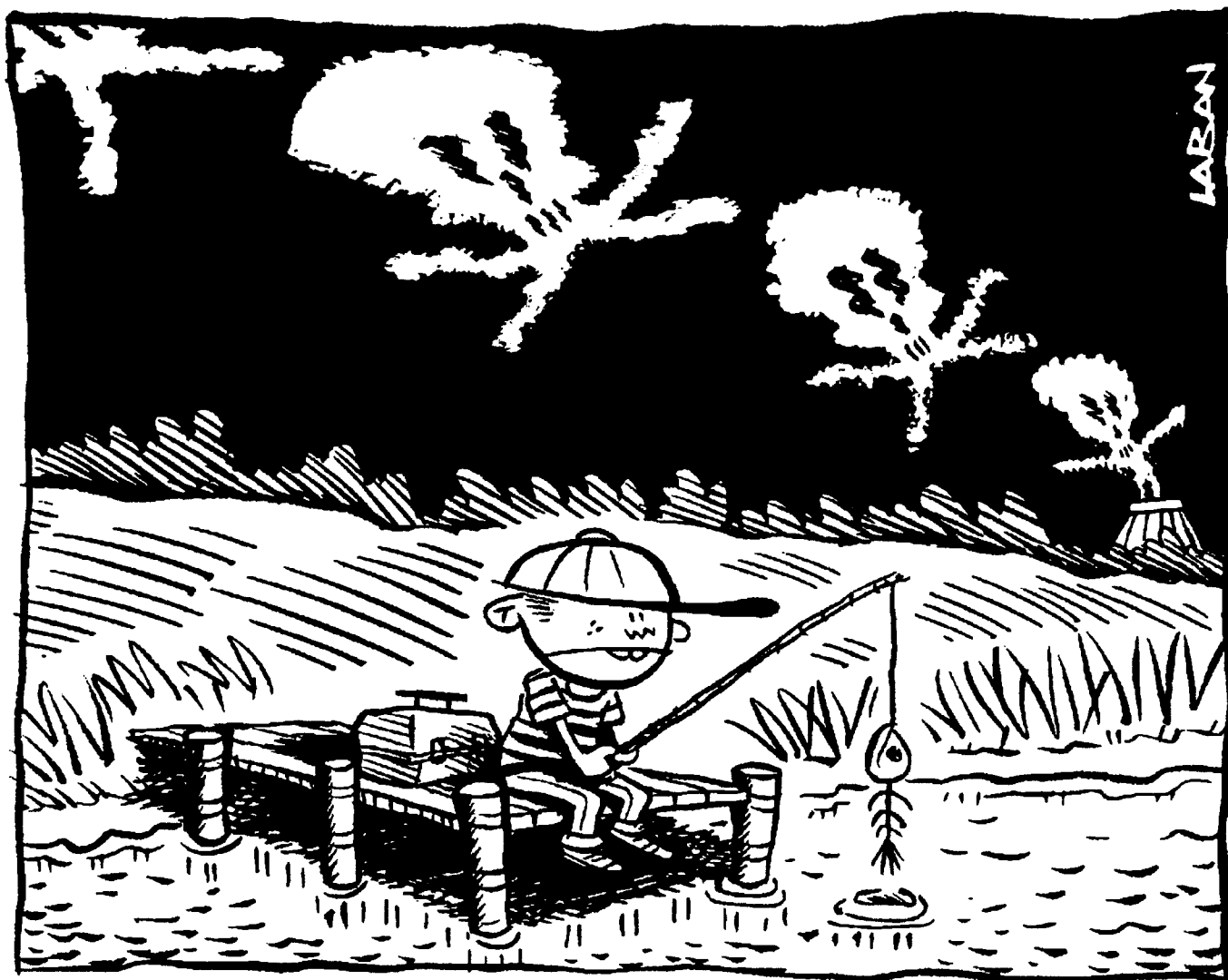
themselves as bound by decisions of their predecessors, but they could easily shut down either plant if they wanted to. The test failures, along with the federal district court decision, alleged improprieties in the permit process and unanswered questions about the risk to nearby communities, all offered legitimate reasons to put WTI operations on hold. For some of the same reasons, the Arkansas incinerator operation could have been suspended.

Speculation abounds that the president's position tolerating dubious incineration projects, despite a campaign pledge to support a moratorium on hazardous-waste incineration, has been heavily influenced by Arkansas investment banker Jackson Stephens, an original investor in WTI—although reportedly no longer involved—and a prominent bankroller of Clinton campaigns. Many government officials also appear sympathetic to the use of incineration as a central waste disposal technology and fear that the current lawsuits could undermine the technology. U.S. EPA administrator Carol Browner has said that she supports municipal-waste incineration, but has been less clear about burning hazardous waste.

Clinton may simply be unwilling to pick a fight with big business on this issue when he's courting their support on economic policy and health care. The *Wall Street Journal* published four editorials defending WTI's incinerator in the weeks leading up to the president's inauguration. In December Vice President-elect Gore had called for an investigation of WTI and said the incinerator should not begin operations until serious questions were answered. Hazardous-waste incinerators are required to destroy 99.99 percent ("four nines") of most wastes but 99.9999 percent ("six nines") of extremely hazardous wastes, such as those that contain dioxins and related immensely toxic chemicals. During

*The president
could ban
dangerous
toxic-waste
incinerators.
But does he
have the will?*

By David Moberg



test burns required for permission to operate, incinerators burn a few relatively pure and concentrated chemicals that supposedly gauge the kiln's ability to destroy wastes adequately.

During the WTI and Vertac court proceedings, opponents have highlighted the following failings of incinerators:

- Incinerators are less effective as the concentrations of toxic chemicals decrease, according to an internal EPA memo from last September written by Sylvia K. Lowrance, director of the Office of Solid Waste. Since most real-world waste is not as concentrated as the test-burn chemicals, operating incinerators are not likely to meet regulatory requirements. Also, this finding suggests current licensing tests are inadequate.

- Dioxins, which are present in many toxic wastes and are also produced during the incineration process itself as a result of incomplete combustion, are some of the most highly toxic wastes produced. They also build up in organisms, or bioaccumulate, in the food chain, as animals eat plants and are in turn consumed by other animals or humans. In the past the EPA had assumed that most dioxins and related

chemicals were emitted from incineration stacks as vapors and posed a threat through inhalation of the vapors alone. Now it believes that most dioxin-like compounds come out as particulates. Thus the risk to animals and humans is far greater through the food they eat than through the polluted air they breathe.

In a leaked January 22 memo to Browner, Richard Guimond, a top EPA solid waste official, reported that the EPA's Office of Research and Development had found "that [cancer] risks from beef and milk consumption can be 1,000 times higher than risks from inhalation near the WTI facility." On that basis alone, there would be a risk of about 1,300 extra cases of cancer for every million people exposed to emissions from the incinerator—130 times greater than the EPA's acceptable risk standard.

The health threat may be even worse that these ominous figures suggest. In a 1992 study the Office of Research and Development estimated that people could be exposed to as much as 10,000 times more dioxins through indirect exposure to food than through inhalation, the only path the EPA has used in assessing incinerator risk. Also, Douglas Craw-

ford-Brown of the University of North Carolina concluded that over 70 years, WTI's operation would create a risk of tens to hundreds of thousands of additional cancer cases per million people.

Guimond warned in his memo that "many air emission sources could be affected" across the country if the EPA started using food-chain risk to determine whether incinerators could operate. EPA critics think Guimond was improperly raising the specter of closing down most incinerators as a way of suppressing action on this new information about food risks.

•The Vertac operators admitted that they could not even reach the "four nines" level of destruction of dioxins with their incinerators, let alone the "six nines" level required by law. The incinerator did adequately destroy what was intended as a dioxin surrogate. Yet to be counted as a surrogate, a substance must be harder to destroy than dioxins; in this case it obviously was not harder to destroy. WTI's test-

burn failures further suggest that even under favorable conditions, the incinerators don't meet standards required by law. But in commercial operations, incinerators burn an extremely varied mixture of wastes under greatly varying conditions and with limited government monitoring. There are also inevitably accidents or so-called "fugitive emissions." All these variations push up sharply the likely emissions of dioxins, heavy metals and other toxins.

•Although the media over the past two years has stressed reports that some scientists believe that dioxins do not cause cancer as readily in small doses as once thought, most recent research has pointed in the opposite direction. A draft EPA study concluded last year that dioxins would cause two to four times as many cancers as previously thought. Yet the gravest danger of dioxins is not cancer, but a wide range of disorders of the body's immune, nervous, endocrine and reproductive systems as well as disruption of the development of fetuses and infants. There appears to be no thresh-

old or "safe dose," and developing embryos are especially vulnerable. Even the current level of dioxins in most people's bodies already constitutes a health hazard, according to the preliminary EPA review of dioxin toxicity.

Ruling on a suit by Greenpeace and local residents, Cleveland federal district court Judge Ann Aldrich in early March told WTI that it could proceed with its trial burn but could not conduct commercial operations until a final permit was issued, which often takes about a year. She concluded that the risk of cancer for those living in the area from even one year of operations was four times higher than the EPA's standard of what is acceptable risk for lifetime exposure to any chemical. Aldrich ruled that "it is patently unsafe" to expose residents near East Liverpool to non-cancer risks for which the EPA has not set some standard of "acceptable risk."

Although both the Ohio and Arkansas district court decisions were harsh blows to the incinerator business, appellate courts quickly lifted the injunctions. The appeals court acted with unusual haste in the Arkansas case, asking attorneys for their oral arguments before an appeal was made or briefs were filed.

Can the toxic march be stopped?

Industries, especially the petrochemical business, generate a lot of hazardous waste that they want to get rid of simply and cheaply. If they can't easily dump or burn their wastes, they will have to change their production processes. Many environmentalists hope that by blocking faulty disposal methods they will force industry to prevent pollution before it starts. While such a change could be very expensive, pollution prevention could also hasten the modernization of many industries, providing a rewarding side benefit.

The EPA estimated in 1989 that industry generates about 6 billion tons of toxic waste each year. Most consists of watery wastes that are treated in some way before they are discharged into the environment. Deep wells and landfills take about one-fifth of the total, usually wastes that are not easily treated. Incineration reportedly disposes of only about 1 percent of all hazardous waste, often the most toxic. Yet since so much of the overall volume of toxic waste is water, this small percentage obscures the central importance of incineration to industry.

While production of hazardous waste increases about 6.5 to 7.5 percent per year, according to Peter Montague of Environmental Research Foundation, environmental toxicologist Robert Ginsburg estimates that hazardous-waste incineration is increasing 20 percent annually. It is popular in part because it incinerates any future legal liability as it burns the waste, unlike other disposal methods, and relies on one method for disposing of many different wastes, Ginsburg wrote last year in a National Toxics Campaign Fund report.

The most important alternative to incineration is simply pollution prevention. Many industrial processes can be changed, for example, replacing toxic petrochemical and chlorinated solvents with soap and water or citrus-based cleaners. Some companies have already made such changes, saving money as well as the environment. The Congressional Office of Technology assessment estimated in a 1986 report that industry could reasonably reduce hazardous waste by half in five years. For remaining hazardous wastes, Ginsburg reports, industry could tailor processes that destroy or detoxify a specific chemical. Using a variety of techniques, ranging from different high-temperature oxidation processes in closed containers to treatment with bacteria or fungi, industry could destroy wastes much more effectively than it does now with incineration. But such processes would require businesses to treat each hazardous waste separately, not dump them together indiscriminately.

Most incinerators are located on sites where the wastes are produced (a factory or hospital, for example). Yet about 18 commercial incinerators across the country accept wastes from virtually any source. Also, about 30 cement kilns, which are permitted to burn hazardous waste in their furnaces, have taken a growing share of the market because they are less stringently regulated, Ginsburg reports.

Then with only brief deliberations, the judges stayed the injunction.

But Government Accountability Project attorney Mick Harrison, who has argued both cases, is confident that the evidence about difficulties destroying toxins in low concentrations and concerns about food-chain risk will ultimately lead to shutdown of both plants.

WTI is vulnerable on other legal, environmental and political counts. Risk assessments are incomplete for

“When you look at all the individual problems over permitting this plant, it’s striking there’s been such a systematic circumvention of regulatory requirements.”

both dioxins and lead. The EPA admits that WTI will emit more lead than federal air-quality standards permit. Also, the Ohio attorney general has been working for nearly three years on a background check of WTI. Ohio has a “bad boy law” on its books that is supposed to prohibit environmental scofflaws or untrustworthy companies from operating in the state. Yet an organized crime figure, according to the FBI, is involved with a U.S. subsidiary of Von Roll, WTI’s corporate owner.

A federal judge recently dismissed—on jurisdictional grounds—a lawsuit brought by the state of West Virginia, which is just across the river from East Liverpool. The suit, supported by the nearby city of Pittsburgh and other plaintiffs, alleges that there were seri-

ous improprieties in licensing WTI. The Government Accounting Office is currently conducting an investigation of those allegations, which could still be raised in another lawsuit. For example, the East Liverpool incinerator has changed owners since it was first approved. That constitutes a modification of the permit and should have opened both federal and state review of WTI’s right to operate. However, neither the federal nor state EPA has formally reviewed or reissued the permit. Another lawsuit by East Liverpool residents charges that the Columbiana County Port Authority illegally changed the use of land bought with a grant from the state of Ohio and then illegally sold the land to WTI.

“When you look at all the individual problems over permitting this plant, it’s striking there’s been such a systematic circumvention of regulatory requirements,” argues Ashley Schanauer, assistant solicitor for the city of Pittsburgh. “This circumvention continues even now. You have an operator that doesn’t have a permit, and neither agency seems to care.”

WTI may run into financial difficulty as well. Du Pont and BASF, two large petrochemical firms that generate much waste but also planned to serve as toxic waste brokers, had contracted to supply 60 percent of WTI’s waste stream. Recently both drastically renegotiated their contracts. That left

Chemical Waste Management, a subsidiary of Waste Management Inc., as the main supplier.

The WTI controversy, reinforced by the Vertac case, has publicized damaging research and established legal precedents against hazardous-waste incineration. But environmental toxicologist Robert Ginsburg, a consultant to several environmental organizations, warns that these two lists do not fight for alternative disposal methods to incineration, including pollution prevention, then the EPA and industry may simply redefine risk standards to accommodate their preferred policy of incineration. As William Ruckelshaus, EPA chief under Nixon and Reagan, once said, risk assessment is like a captured spy. Tortured enough it will say anything.

The WTI and Vertac cases also call into question the environmental standards of the new administration. Their weak stand on these incinerator issues bodes ill for how the administration may act when the important Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which covers many waste issues, comes before Congress for renewal later this year.

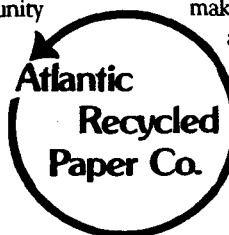
“All the people who voted for the Clinton-Gore team on the basis of their environmental statements are wondering what they voted for,” says attorney Harrison. “Bush administration policies are still there.”



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ENVIRONMENT

The toxic truth

For 13 years Caldwell County in North Carolina was the scene of an all-too-familiar toxic tragedy. Caldwell Systems Inc. (CSI) operated a poorly regulated toxic waste incinerator that spewed residues from solvents, varnish, paint and industrial glues used by local factories. People living downwind of CSI's kiln frequently were short of breath, became dizzy or suffered chest pains. They worried about the long-term effects of the chemical brew they inhaled every day. Finally, after a 1989 fire, the Caldwell County Superior Court ordered the CSI facility to shut down permanently.

For the first time, a federal study publicly acknowledges a link between health problems and exposure to toxic chemicals.

By William K. Burke

But the Caldwell County saga has an epilogue

that could help the grass-roots anti-toxics movement at long last to prove to mainstream USA that toxic wastes are harming or killing thousands of Americans each year. In January, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released a draft report confirming that residents who breathed CSI's fumes suffer higher-than-average numbers of nervous and respiratory system disorders.

This may not have been news to CSI's downwinders, but it marked the first time a federal health agency produced a study publicly acknowledging a link between health problems and exposure to toxic chemicals. "[ATSDR's] report on CSI's incinerator is historic," says Linda King, executive director of the Environmental Health Network.

From Denver to New England, grass-roots organizers have long accused the ATSDR of refusing to follow up on neighborhood surveys that suggest toxic waste may be killing and injuring thousands of Americans. Yet now, even some of the ATSDR's most bitter critics believe the North Carolina report shows the agency is serious about changing its ways. They warn, however, that the agency's reforms

will fail if the man behind them, ATSDR chief Dr. Barry Johnson, is unable to resist political pressure.

King says Johnson's reform efforts are long overdue. "I do not see the ATSDR as efficient in any way. They are the smallest federal health-related agency. They have a huge mandate and they have failed miserably."

The ATSDR, which is technically part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services but works most closely with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), was created by the 1980 federal Superfund law to investigate health problems in communities near toxic waste sites in the EPA's Superfund cleanup program. In its first six years, the ATSDR completed only three of the 812 studies of health problems around Superfund sites that Congress ordered. But though the 1986 Superfund reforms strengthened the agency and resulted in more completed health studies and assessments, environmentalists question whether this has meant real progress.

The ATSDR has rarely demanded strong public health protection around toxic waste sites—and was attacked by the Reagan/Bush EPA when it did. In 1990, after the ATSDR helped force the EPA to buy 13 homes alongside the Industrial Excess Superfund site near Uniontown, Ohio, the EPA slashed the ATSDR's budget by \$15 million.

At the time, Johnson told Ohio anti-toxics organizers that the EPA was punishing his agency by stripping away the money. "I said that in a moment of frustration: we had just gotten our budget back from the EPA. It was an unprofessional comment," Johnson now says. Unprofessional or not, Johnson's admission spotlights the politics behind his battle to improve scientific understanding of toxic health hazards.

"Inconclusive by Design," a report released last year by the Environmental Health Network and the National Toxics Campaign Fund (NTCF), documented numerous ways in which the ATSDR has failed to protect people exposed to toxic chemicals. They included:

- Allowing the EPA to bury health studies. Carver Terrace was an African-American community in Texarkana, Texas, built upon land contaminated by wood-treatment chemicals. In 1984, the EPA named the area as a Superfund site. On April 10, 1989, the ATSDR published a health assessment that said the chemicals contaminating Carver Terrace posed a potential hazard to human health. But no one told the residents about the assessment. Eventually the Carver Terrace Community Action Group discovered that the EPA was holding the document. The group revealed the contents of the ATSDR's report at an April 1990 press conference. That press conference helped Rep. Jim Chapman (D-TX) push through a bill that appropriated \$5 million to buy the homes in Carver Terrace and relocate the area's residents.

- Continuing to study communities long after evidence of toxic damage is found. In Kellogg, Idaho, the site of a lead smelter, the ATSDR has documented dangerous lead levels in the blood of area children for over a decade. (See *In These Times*, Feb. 26, 1992.) But the agency has never recommended relocating or treating Kellogg's lead-poisoning victims. "They are studying that community to death," says the Environmental Health Network's King.

- Basing health assessments on faulty studies. At the Coakley Landfill Superfund site in southern New Hampshire, a 1988 ATSDR health assessment based on state of New Hampshire health data concluded that the Coakley Landfill posed no threat to local people. But the state of New Hampshire had already admitted that its study methods were "not capable of either proving or disproving" a connection between local cancer rates and the toxic waste dump. "I think the federal government is covering up," says Martha Bailey, a local community leader and member of the NTCF board of directors. "This area, southern Rockingham County, has the highest cancer rate [in New Hampshire]. But nobody is looking into why."

- Failing to produce studies at controversial sites. Former NTCF Western Regional Director Adrienne Anderson assembled evidence showing that a Martin Marietta facility leaked waste from rocket fuel production into Denver's drinking water for 30 years. Anderson believes the pollution may be responsible for the deaths of 17

children in a subdivision called Friendly Hills. But the Colorado Department of Health (CDH), which conducted the preliminary health assessment of the Marietta site on behalf of the ATSDR, failed to address the community group's evidence. And the CDH and ATSDR still have not released the final Martin Marietta Superfund site health assessment. Former CDH head Tom Vernon (see *In These Times*, Oct. 28, 1992) had promised the assessment would be submitted for public comment in 1990. "We continue to clip the obituaries and the ATSDR has produced no report," Anderson says.

"Inconclusive by Design" called for the ATSDR to abandon traditional epidemiological approaches when studying populations living near toxic waste sites. Epidemiology is the science of tracking epidemics through large populations. But toxic exposures affect relatively small populations and can bring on a wide variety of symptoms, from skin rashes to cancer. As a result, when local anti-toxics organizations tell public health officials about clusters of a few dozen birth defects or childhood cancers, they are usually told that their horror stories are statistically meaningless.

Johnson says he agrees in part with environmentalists' contention that traditional epidemiology cannot provide a true test of the health threats posed by toxic sites. He notes that there are practical as well as scientific limits to studying neighborhoods exposed to toxic waste. Most importantly, toxic waste sites are often located in impoverished neighborhoods where populations change quickly, diluting the results of long-term health studies.

"I think the environmental health field is characterized by inadequate science, particularly with regard to human health effects," Johnson says. He hopes that ongoing research into biological markers—which are trace compounds that prove specific toxics have damaged a victim's cells—will soon allow the ATSDR to more accurately assess the effects of toxic wastes on humans. The agency is also developing statistical methods for grouping isolated populations exposed to similar types of pollution to make meaningful conclusions about toxic hazards possible.

Johnson adds that the ATSDR is working to develop a national database documenting associations between exposure to toxic substances and symptoms ranging from violent behavior to damaged immune systems and cancer. "Government has put a lot of resources into pollution control at the expense of pollution prevention. Environmental health investigations and databases have not been nearly as well supported," he says. By assembling the facts about hundreds of isolated toxic tragedies, the ATSDR would build a nationwide case for the EPA to reform the burgeoning toxic-waste cleanup industry.

Johnson also wants the ATSDR to give community groups more power over Superfund. "I think involving local groups in decision-making and making them part [of health studies and assessments] is an extremely

important policy for government agencies."

Environmentalists are eager to take Johnson at his word, but they remain wary of the ATSDR's record. "It seems to me that what is happening in the field is not getting back to Dr. Johnson and his staff at headquarters," says the NTCF's Cathy Hinds, who co-edited "Inconclusive by Design." "He has shown a genuine concern to do what is right, but that's the only thing I've seen change so far."

"Dr. Johnson deserves a pat on the back. He is the first government official who has come here and really listened to people," adds Marie Flickenger. Flickenger has led the fight against Monsanto's plans to clean up the Brio Superfund site near Houston, Texas, by incinerating tons of soil laced with jet fuel byproducts. The incinerator will be next door to a subdivision and an elementary school. (See *In These Times*, Feb. 13, 1991.)

An April 1989 ATSDR health assessment said that the Brio cleanup plan would cause no health problems. But worried residents of the Southbend subdivision, which abuts Brio, conducted their own informal health survey from August 1989 to mid-1990. It showed that 11 of 13 Southbend women pregnant during a four-month period in 1986-87—when the Brio site was being excavated for tests of cleanup technologies—gave birth to children with birth defects.

Johnson says his agency has now decided to look more

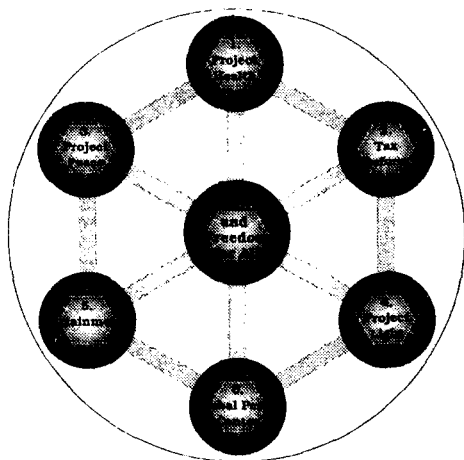
closely at the community health data from Brio. But Superfund politics may derail Johnson's efforts. The EPA's Region 6 office is refusing to ask Monsanto to reconsider its Brio cleanup plans—despite the fact that an independent audit conducted by the University of Texas School of Public Health concluded that the data used to estimate the danger the Brio site posed to local residents was "insufficient."

On March 15-16, EPA representatives refused to attend the community-sponsored portion of a "Brio Summit" at which Johnson sat on a panel with community members and other toxics experts. "The ATSDR is an advisory, not a regulatory, agency. The EPA can totally ignore the ATSDR," Flickenger says. "The ATSDR is the agency best protecting the public health, but its hands are tied. They should be made independent of the EPA. Communities need the ATSDR to be given strong enough teeth to control Superfund."

Johnson agrees that EPA control hinders his agency. "Because our budget comes from the EPA, it makes it more difficult for us to function as independently of the EPA as community groups would like," he says. "But that's a problem I can't fix. It has to be something Congress thinks is important and would seek to change in some way." ◀

William K. Burke covers environmental issues for *In These Times*.

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B L A C K A M E R I C A

The NAACP's new face

B

y naming the Rev. Benjamin Chavis Jr. the new executive director of the NAACP, board members of the venerable organization bucked tradition. Not only is the 45-year-old Chavis younger than the group's five previous directors, he also has a different temperament—he's a left-leaning polemicist with a penchant for confrontation.

Chavis comes to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from his previous post as executive director of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, where he left his mark as an audacious and creative leader. He's been in the forefront of protests against so-called environmental racism and has been an ardent opponent of U.S. policy toward Africa.

Chavis, a native of Oxford, N.C., has been active in civil rights causes

since his early teens. In 1971 he and a group of others—later dubbed the "Wilmington 10"—were arrested and convicted for inciting violence during a school desegregation protest in Wilmington, N.C. The case became a cause célèbre in the black activist community, and the Wilmington 10 were transformed into movement martyrs. The charges were later thrown out by a federal court, but not until Chavis had served four years in prison.

He assumed leadership of the Commission for Racial Justice soon after the court overturned the verdict and, most observers would agree, has thoroughly infused the group with his passion for racial justice. During Chavis' tenure, the commission has become an outspoken advocate of confrontation on issues of racism. His syndicated weekly column, "Civil Rights Journal," appears in hundreds of black-oriented publications across the country.

As a member of the generation shaped by the Black Power movement, Chavis brings a starkly different mind-set to the leadership of

this most venerable of civil rights organizations. In recent years it has become routine to dismiss the NAACP for losing touch with the struggle, for being out of style, even for being irrelevant. But when Chavis was growing up in the '60s, black youth regarded the group with even less esteem than they do now.

"A lot of organizations have come and gone, but the NAACP has stood the test of time," Chavis says. "Each generation has a challenge and has to rise to the occasion of their own challenge."

Indeed, one of the major challenges these days is countering a growing sense of alienation, even nihilism, within many black communities—especially those in resource-starved inner cities. Some analysts argue that the processes leading to Chavis' selection were generated by internal disagreements over how to approach these new challenges. He takes over from the Rev. Benjamin Hooks, who headed the group for 15 years, during much of the period of its declining stature.

The selection of a new chief thus comes at a pivotal time in the history of the NAACP. Founded in 1909 by an interracial group of intellectuals, businesspeople and civic leaders who were determined to better the lot of African-Americans, the group has weathered many ideological storms.

The current storm pits neo-nationalist advocates of black self-help against those who insist the U.S. government has a crucial role to play in improving African-Americans' quality of life and must be held accountable. While many other civil rights groups have shifted to accommodate neo-nationalist influences, the NAACP under Hooks clung to its integrationist heritage.

But executive director Hooks also was chafing under the

Benjamin Chavis, the NAACP's new executive director, brings a starkly different mind-set to the leadership of this most venerable of civil rights organizations.

By Salim Muwakkil

weight of the NAACP's moldy tradition. In 1990, he helped found a group called the National Association of Black Organizations to develop self-help programs for African-Americans. In many ways, his move was a slap in the face of the group he was leading: a group that was formed in part to counter the influence of Booker T. Washington, who was the most famous black self-help advocate.

When Hooks announced his resignation, speculation grew that he had affronted board chairman William Gibson and was gently pushed into a premature retirement. And although the involved parties all deny that scenario, it seems increasingly plausible. The contradiction between Hooks' leadership of a self-help group and the integrationist goals of the NAACP seems too acute to finesse.

That is the probable reason why the NAACP's 64-member board was handed the name of Jesse Jackson, president of the National Rainbow Coalition, as a contender for the executive director position. Jackson represents a bridge between the self-help pole and its integrationist opposite. During most of the search for a successor to Hooks, members of the organization were involved in a heated debate over Jackson's candidacy.

Some said his freelance, shoot-from-the-hip style was unsuitable for the NAACP, and others questioned why such a free spirit as Jackson would even want the job. Jackson pulled out a week before Chavis' selection, and many of the group's board members say he would have lost anyway. He offered a list of grievances with the letter he wrote withdrawing his candidacy.

Among other things, Jackson accused board chairman Gibson of engineering organizational changes that would reduce the executive director's power. He also chided the group for its timid response to the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992 and its apparent lack of interest in social issues like teen pregnancy, drug abuse and AIDS. Although his criticisms were on the mark, it seems more likely that he pulled out because he suspected he would lose.

Reflecting some of the anger many NAACP board members expressed over what they consider Jackson's posturing, T.H. Poole, president of the Florida branch of the NAACP, said he believes Jackson was never the frontrunner. He said Jackson's candidacy had touched off a wave of negative comments from board members, adding, "Most of them expressed grave concern over the administrative ability and temperamental compatibility of Rev. Jackson with the NAACP." Poole also said Jackson's contention that the organization was changing the rules was a

smokescreen to conceal the fact that he would lose.

Like Jackson, Chavis is a bridge between the ideas of self-help nationalism, which are popular today, and the integrationist, civil rights traditions of the NAACP. Chavis is focusing especially on the concerns of black youth. He was an organizer of a scheduled street gang summit in Kansas City and was involved in efforts to minimize the possibility of violence following the outcome

of the second trial of the cops who beat Rodney King.

Also high on his agenda is opening the NAACP to Hispanics, Asians and American Indians, and organizing a meeting of African-American leaders to set an agenda for black America.

But one longtime observer of the NAACP believes that Chavis' ascension to leadership will not alter the essential nature of the group. "Chavis is one man, a freelancer, who will

Benjamin Chavis is a creative leader with a penchant for confrontation.

be completely reined in by the board if he gets too free," says Harold Cruse, professor emeritus of history at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and author of the 1987 book *Plural But Equal*.

"The NAACP is absolutely committed to its strategy of legalism and integration, and the time for those strategies is past," Cruse adds. "We are entering the 21st century, and the NAACP is still bound to 19th- and 20th-century techniques."

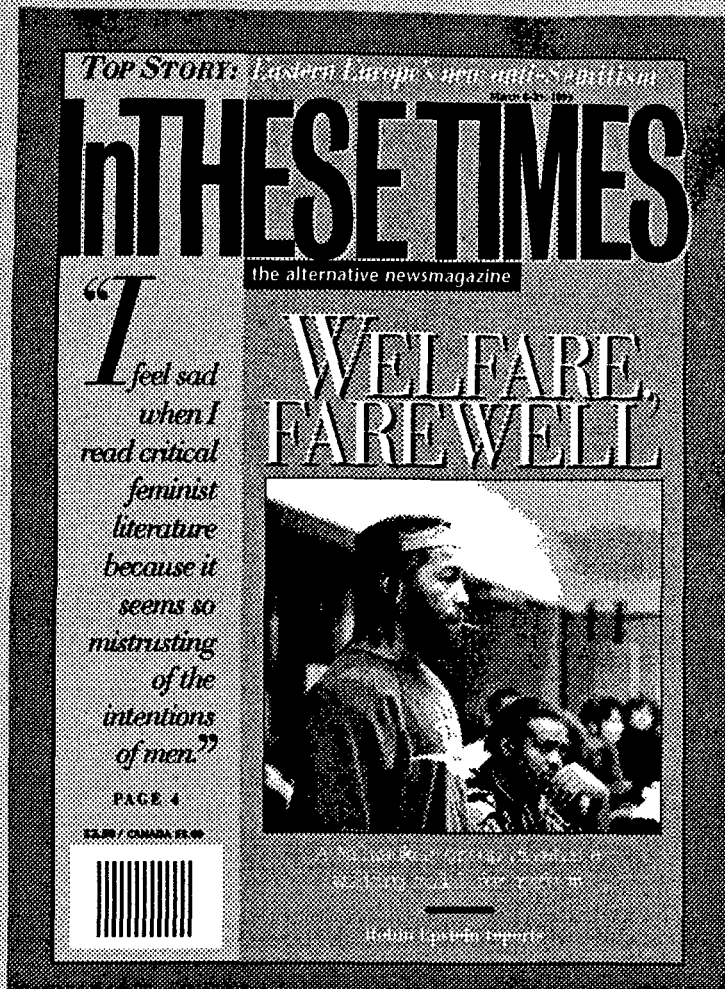
Chavis recalls how he was escorted in leg irons and handcuffs from jail in 1979 to the campus of Duke University to study for a divinity degree. By then he was serving his fourth year in a minimum-security prison. Nonetheless, he said, prison officials did not make any exceptions to the lights-out rule at 10 p.m., and the only place he could study was by the toilets, which were lit all night.

"I can't describe to you just how filthy a prison toilet can be," he said. In that year, he learned Greek and translated the New Testament from English to Greek.

He wants the NAACP to get more involved in environmental issues. "The highest concentration of dump sites has always been in black areas." He also plans for the group to become involved with foreign policy issues, particularly those affecting Africa. "We have to be advocates for the mother country. We simply can't let our country continue its arrogant, often racist policy toward African countries."

It appears to be a new day at the NAACP. Let's hope it's a long one. ◀





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I N T H E A R T S

Families in flux

**In Olivier
Olivier and
The Last Days
of Chez Nous,
women
directors
map changing
domestic
relationships.**

By Pat Dowell

The myth of the happy family is used to bludgeon us all, parents and children, into smiling submission. And, increasingly, the religious right urges Hollywood to hammer home that myth in "family entertainment."

A few filmmakers—mostly from distant shores—find the nature of family life a far more disconcerting topic, especially for women. Two current movies directed by women, Agnieszka Holland's *Olivier Olivier* and Gillian Armstrong's *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, show households eroding, transforming, evolving and breaking the rules.

The melodramatic central event of *Olivier Olivier* is the disappearance of a child. In a Hollywood production, this disappearance would constitute the movie's reason for being. But for Holland, the Polish director of 1991's *Europa*

Europa, it's merely the pretext for examining the shifting allegiances in an unbalanced French family, the Duvals.

Elisabeth, the mother, so conspicuously dotes on the soon-to-vanish Olivier that she seems unhinged before the tragedy takes place. Her passion for him appears almost sensual, and her attitude toward her other child, a slightly older daughter named Nadine, is emotionally neglectful if not actually resentful.

Jealousy and conflicted passion are a way of life under the Duval roof for Nadine and her father Serge, who themselves are fascinated by the cherubic Olivier. It's apparent that this family does not have the wherewithal to resist the blow they sustain when Olivier sets off for grandmother's house like Little Red Riding Hood. The film doesn't reveal the identity of the wolf who intercepts him until the end, but it's not hard to guess halfway through what happened to him.

In the wake of the boy's disappearance, the Duvals fly apart. Elisabeth collapses, Nadine withdraws into self-mutilation and private ritual, and Serge gets the itch to take a job in Africa.

Six years later, however, the family reconvenes over the arrival of a teenaged hustler who claims to be Olivier. Elisabeth willfully accepts him as the genuine article. Serge, less certain, nevertheless welcomes this secretive and insinuating enigma of a boy as a masculine ally.

The two men chuckle over the weaknesses of women, and Elisabeth in particular. "People are afraid of solitude, especially women," Serge observes. "They need someone to crush."

Olivier notes that his mother had Nadine for this purpose all those years when the two men of the house had separately flown the coop. "Nadine doesn't crush easily," comes the reply.

Indeed, Elisabeth has become a wraithlike figure eager to remake the

past, while Nadine has become a formidable creature who has wised up to the ways of men and berates her mother for taking father and son back as masters.

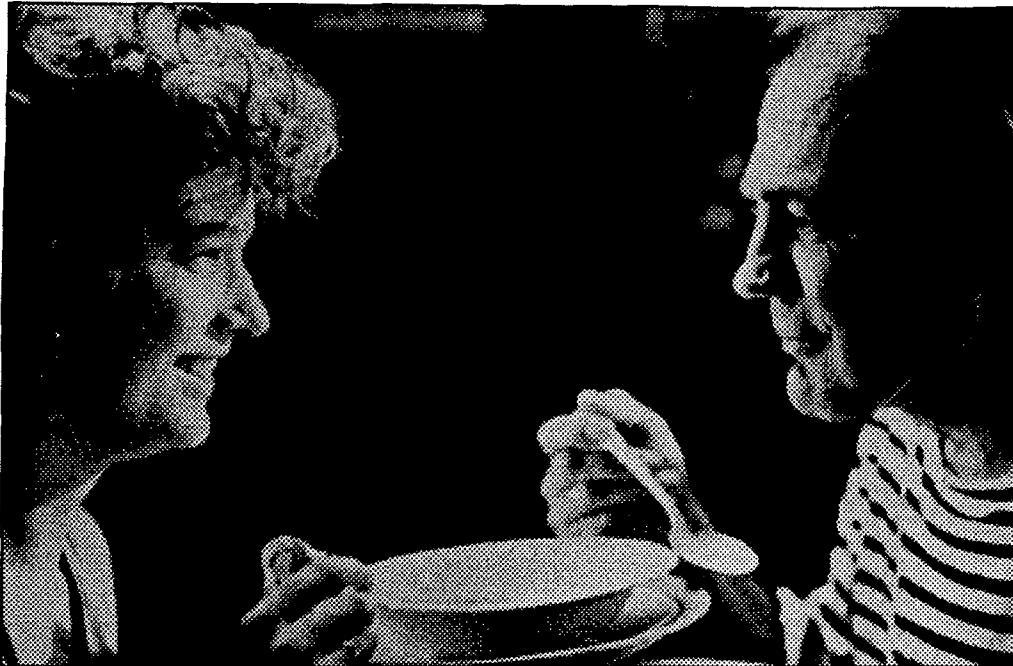
In the careening, never gentle pattern of the family's



Olivier Olivier
Directed by Agnieszka Holland

The Last Days of Chez Nous
Directed by Gillian Armstrong

© 1992 Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.



Kerry Fox and Bruno Ganz in *The Last Days of Chez Nous*. Previous page: Faye Gatteau in *Olivier Olivier*.

Even then Nadine (and the viewer) are in for a few more turns of the screw, until some sort of family circle that everyone can live with is reconstituted. Believe it or not, Holland manages to conjure a happy ending of sorts, though a perverse one.

Holland is a filmmaker preoccupied with false identities and deceptive relationships. In *Europa Europa*, a Jew successfully hides in Hitler's army. In *Angry Harvest*, a Polish farmer protects a death-camp fugitive in order to have a grateful woman under his roof.

In those movies as in this one, a remarkable cast seems set free by Holland's intense, uninhibited sensibility. As befits a movie in which the young lead the way toward healing, the most amazing performances are those of the actresses who play Nadine (Marina Golovine and the child Faye Gatteau) and the actors who play Olivier (Gregoire Colin and the child Emmanuel Morozof).

Olivier Olivier is about the assigned identities and mostly involuntary set of relationships that define a family. It suggests that those who would survive such arrangements must make their own power, as Nadine, with the mild telekinesis she has developed over the years, is able "to make things move from afar." Properly apportioned power sometimes makes love possible where the orthodoxy of family values has failed.

The family in Australian director Gillian Armstrong's *The Last Days of Chez Nous* is in far less dire straits than

interactions, Nadine continues to make little sorties into Olivier's territory—testing his knowledge, his intentions, his motives, even his sense of limits—until she gets the answer she wants about his identity.

into infatuation with Vicki. Both men can't seem to lose the habit of being deferred to.

Beth's father does his domineering the old-fashioned way; on their outback outing (an anxious offering of filial duty on her part), he tells her how to drive. J. P. is a new man; he's fussy about his cooking and that special Brie he's been aging on the top shelf of the pantry. What's really bothering him is not Beth's sneaking a piece of his cherished cheese, but her full-steam-ahead attack on life.

Armstrong, like Holland, is blessed with a living, breathing cast, although it is unsettling to see the exquisite Swiss-born actor Bruno Ganz impersonate a slightly thickheaded Frenchman, churning his German-accented English into French-fried Anglais.

Kerry Fox, so ethereal in Jane Campion's *An Angel at My Table*, is, in the role of tremulous yet bold Vicki, still made of something other than flesh and blood. She's nicely counterbalanced by the earthiness and edginess of Lisa Harrow as Beth, who is a feminist stung by the occasional twinge of fear about whether she will be able to find the landmarks on the untraveled road ahead.

She is as rich and warm as the remarkably textured surfaces of the Sydney house called *Chez Nous*. Its list of inhabitants changes but it remains a home that looks and feels remarkably lived in. In fact, Armstrong appears most at home with the quotidian details of this family easing into a transition. Sometimes the story itself seems unfocused, but the people and even the objects—weathered wood, worn dishes, faded paint even—hum with vitality.

There's something of that paradox in Holland's *Olivier Olivier* too. She excels in chronicling the Duvals' unpredictable collisions of personality, while the plot that got them there drifts into the familiar. In both movies, the fabric of life is so vivid they could almost exist without a story. ◀

IN PRINT

Fresh start

By Paul Bass

Now that it's in vogue to support social programs again, Ed Zigler and Susan Muenchow have written what can amount to an important book. It won't look important to the general public—too much academic jargon. But it's a crucial work for people trying to sell the idea that government can help people.

Ed Zigler, a psychology professor at Yale, is the father of Head Start—he helped design it, oversaw the program during the Nixon administration and has remained among its most visible and effective advocates since then, the person each administration has called on to help figure out what to do with disadvantaged preschool kids.

The Clintons love Head Start. Then again, so does nearly everyone else: it has given 10 million poor kids and 11 million parents a lift toward success in mainstream society. Until very recently, few even among conservatives have been willing to criticize it; it's a poverty program even George Bush claimed to like.

Like good policy wonks, Zigler and Muenchow offer suggestions to improve a program to which they're clearly devoted: by lowering teacher-student ratios; sending local programs more technical help, while also seriously monitoring them for the first time to insist on quality; expanding them to include infants and toddlers; and broadening eligibility to struggling families who don't fit the overly strict definitions of "poor."

But the book, an astute guide to Washington insider politics, is more than a position paper. It recounts the adventures of idealistic academic Ed Zigler from the time he first received an invitation from the Johnson White House to help design a program for impoverished preschoolers and their parents. Over the years, Zigler struggled against over-anxious White House promoters of the program who promised more dramatic quick results (like raised IQ scores) than Head Start could reasonably deliver; overseeing the program under Nixon, he found out he was a patsy for

Republicans who wanted him to dismantle it because it didn't live up to the exaggerated expectations Zigler had just warned against. Ironies abound: Zigler watched in disbelief as a well-meaning Carter administration almost destroyed Head Start by trying to hand over control to the state governments—but the program survived the Reagan-Bush years as the one major social program to actually receive increased funding.

As the book makes abundantly clear, Head Start has succeeded in large part because its most visible beneficiaries are children. True, the U.S. lags far behind other Western countries in how we value children: we pay arbitrageurs and lawyers 100 times what we pay day-care workers. But even at the height of the Reagan backlash, people didn't hate poor kids as much as they hated poor adults—at least no one blamed the kids for their poverty.

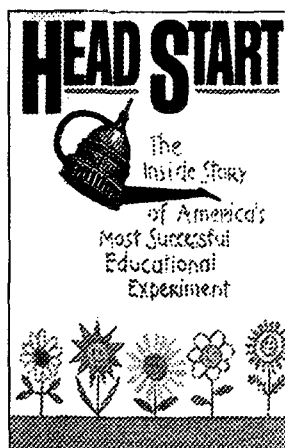
Though it is not generally realized, Head Start concentrates almost as much on the parents as it does on the kids—requiring them to do volunteer work for the program, hiring many of them to work for it, teaching them new skills, helping them find permanent employment. Politically, though, it pays to put the kids out front.

The program was designed to survive, to avoid bureaucratic and political traps. It relies heavily on volunteers, guarding against some of the vagaries of budget cutting. It also invests the parents and the community in the program, creating a larger constituency for the program—and discouraging dependency.

At the same time, the program insists on standards, at least on paper, meaning that all workers have to be up to doing the job for the kids. The standards issue is crucial. The failures of some other War on Poverty programs to produce more concrete results, thanks in part to lax standards, contributed to the public disenchantment with liberalism in the Reagan era.

Of course, as PR experts have always known, it's not enough to have a quality program to pump—you also have to pump it. When Zigler realized that Nixon had lied about his commitment to Head Start, he learned he needed to continually accentuate the program's positive results in order to keep it safe from cuts—to function, in effect, as an advocate.

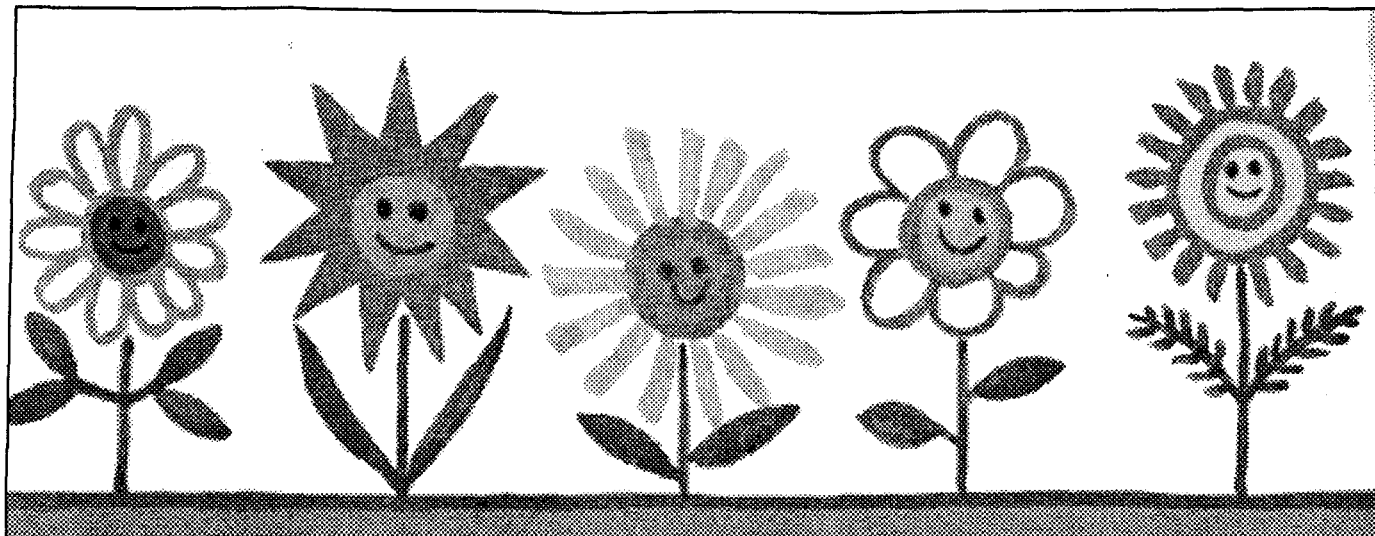
But there are advocates and there are advocates. There's a big difference between those who are up front about pushing the merits of social programs and those who make a



Head Start: The Inside Story of America's Most Successful Educational Experiment

By Edward Zigler and Susan Muenchow

Basic Books
274 pp., \$27.50



career out of manipulating government money for their own ends—often at the expense of the people they claim to want to help. Case in point: Zigler stood firm with community groups who wanted to use Head Start money to finance protests and sit-ins. Yes, Head Start aimed for “community empowerment.” But Zigler wasn’t ready, as one community organizer effectively proposed, “to give up a whole generation of our children” to push a political agenda.

For all its insights, though, the book leaves some important questions open. For instance, Zigler reports visiting L.A.’s Watts ghetto during the 1965 riots. “Head Start workers were protected by the Head Start logo they wore on their sleeves—clearly a sign of the esteem Head Start enjoyed in that community.” Zigler observes, “[I]n 1965, if you wore the Head Start badge, you were safe.” However, he notes, that’s not true today: “Head Start programs are as likely to be targets of crime as any other establishment.” Is that a comment on Head Start? On the limits of social programs? Or of something broader? He doesn’t say. It’s worth exploring.

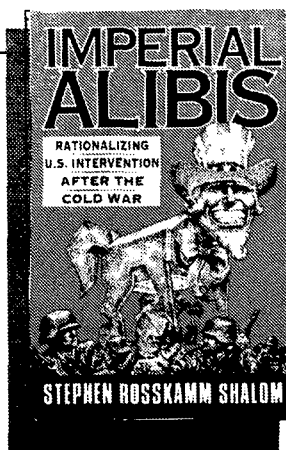
Then there’s the great middle-class question—you know, the one that got Bill Clinton elected. Clinton’s pollster, Stanley Greenberg, has written persuasively in the *American Prospect* that Democrats need to prove to the middle class that they too have a stake in compassionate government. That same

logic has propelled Democrats to argue that government programs should be expanded to include not just the poor but the middle classes as well. Zigler makes a good case for expanding the program. But to date it has been a poor people’s program—and it has succeeded. That seems to defy the dictates of political realism.

Finally, though Zigler is right about the inherent conflict facing advocates who work on the inside, he has trouble fully understanding his own conflicts. The book merely skims over the question of how the pilot Head Start program in Zigler’s hometown of New Haven grew so corrupt and ineffective

in the late ’80s that the feds had to close down the operation and move it to a new sponsor. If Zigler didn’t have so many ties there—the new Head Start building is even named after him—he might have offered some important insights on the local controversy. He doesn’t. Overall, though, *Head Start* offers the standard-bearers of compassion politics plenty of vivid advice on how to take advantage of their first real opening in more than a decade. ◀

Paul Bass, a reporter for the *New Haven Advocate*, is a regular contributor to *In These Times*.



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IMPERIAL ALIBIS:

Rationalizing U.S. Intervention after the Cold War

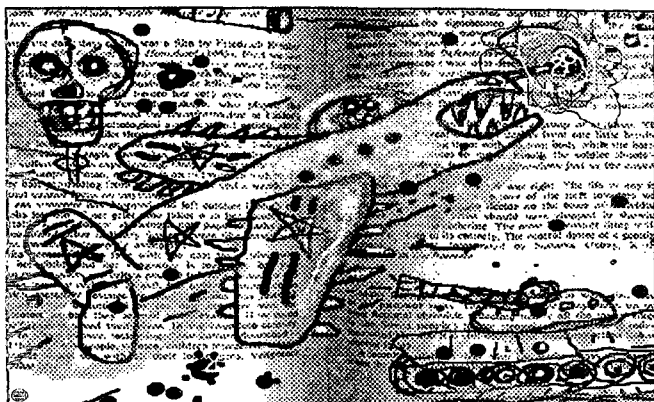
by *Stephen R. Shalom*

This book reminds us that the Soviet threat was never more than an excuse for “massive military spending, constant interventions abroad, and repression at home,”—and that the new world order will simply prompt new “alibis” for the same imperial behavior. 293 pages. \$16.00.

Lucidly argued and carefully documented, Stephen Shalom's study of the pretexts for intervention is an invaluable guide to the recent past and the likely future.
—Noam Chomsky

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SPEED READING



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Imperial Alibis: Rationalizing U.S. Intervention After the Cold War

By Stephen Rosskamm Shalom
South End Press, 293 pp., \$16

What with the Marines storming the beaches of Somalia to feed the children, humanitarian airlifts over Bosnia and a couple of dozen useless military bases finally being closed, former critics of Cold War America may have a hard time gaining their bearings.

Stephen Rosskamm Shalom's *Imperial Alibis* helps, presenting an historical overview of assorted United States aggressions and alibis over the past four decades, shedding doubt on current claims of a new military humanitarianism (see *In These Times*, March 22).

As Shalom shows, the U.S. military doesn't have much of a humanitarian track record: it's generally ignored signs of impending catastrophe, remaining officially neutral and unofficially sympathetic to the perpetrators of massacres from Saddam to Siad Barre. Only very late, typically after images of misery and carnage have saturated the U.S. media, does the U.S. make a show of stepping in with aid. Richard Nixon expressed the logic behind many of these last-minute interventions when, in the midst of the starvation in Biafra, he reportedly ordered the State Department to "get those nigger babies off my TV set."

Unfortunately, Shalom's narrow focus on direct military intervention leads him to ignore the implications of more subtle strategies of control—and the drastic changes in the international economic order represented, perhaps most clearly, by the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. There is no prospect of an impending U.S. invasion of Mexico—or for that matter, Canada—but NAFTA will surely reduce Mexico's status to one strikingly similar to its prerevolutionary state of international dependency, and may work to pull Canada's relatively progressive social insurance programs down to our own meager levels.

Is direct military intervention perhaps becoming less of a threat? If so, what is likely to take its place? *Imperial Alibis*

offers no real answers, and Shalom's theoretical framework—elevating "racism, sexism and heterosexism" to the level of "capitalism" as sources of U.S. conduct—seems particularly threadbare. If we want to understand global political domination, we need to know something about the global economy.

—David Finkel

Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749

By I. F. Clarke
Oxford University Press
268 pp., \$30

Fiction, I.F. Clarke argues in the updated edition of this 1966 classic, has for the last two centuries been used throughout Europe and the United States to predict, and often justify, military action. The Western world was changing so fast in the mid-19th century that only fiction could keep up, and popular periodicals began turning from actual news to reports of the merely possible. The steam engine, the hot air balloon and other such inventions promised that the next war would be unlike anything that people had seen before, and a rush of articles, pamphlets and pictorials showed the public what that war would—at least potentially—be like.

One of the most notorious of these predictions, the 1871 work *The Battle of Dorking*, by Sir George Tomkyns Chesney, warned of a possible invasion by French forces in fire-breathing ships of stone. Chesney hoped that the alarming, if fanciful, story "would drive home the need for a complete reorganization of the British military system."

Chesney set a standard for war prophecy that has persisted to the present. Clarke lays out a history of imagined wars from Napoleon's day to the present—featuring German invasions of the British Isles, a naval world war and no end of nuclear holocausts. Most of these works, it turns out, had nationalist agendas in mind, and more often than not were written by military commanders. Few of these writers—H.G. Wells and several others excepted—offered pleas for peace.

In the era after Hiroshima, our weaponry became too sophisticated, too grandiose for a single planet, and predictions of war turned to predictions of nuclear holocaust—whether triggered by the Reds, or by mice in a missile silo—that reinforced worries of global unpredictability. Books like Gen. John Hackett's *The Third World War: A Future History* (which had both Reagan and Thatcher among its two million readers) helped to justify a paranoid military "preparedness" just as Chesney had a century earlier.

The nearer Clarke gets to the present day, unfortunately, the less he speculates about the hidden agendas behind stories of catastrophe and invasion. But they're still there. The end of the Cold War opens up new possibilities for conflict—fictional and otherwise—and readers of Clarke's book will certainly wonder what future wars the future has in store.

—Kurt Gottschalk

The penile code

By Phyllis Eckhaus

Rape is a bizarre legal construct, weighing male delusion against female experience. If the guy on the street, the so-called "reasonable man," could believe that the woman "asked for it," why then, it's sex, not rape—that is, if the man has made what a jury concludes is a "reasonable mistake" as to consent, it doesn't much matter how the woman experienced the encounter. Thus the arguments of defense lawyers seem crafted to confirm women's worst nightmares: that men see women as nothing more than walking sexual opportunities.

Witness recent coverage of the "Spur Posse," the gang of suburban California high school jocks who racked up points in a contest to "score" with as many girls as possible, no matter how young or unwilling. Their conquests apparently included the rape of a 10-year-old girl, yet a proud Posse father was not perturbed, announcing to *Time* magazine that "Nothing my boy did was anything any red-blooded American boy wouldn't do at his age."

He may have a point. Surveys of college males suggest that your average "reasonable man" has some far from reasonable notions about relations between the sexes. In one study, nearly a third of those surveyed said that while they wouldn't rape a woman, they would "use force" to obtain sex, as if force were a form of foreplay. Another 30 percent said they'd rape if they thought they could get away with it. It's hard to know which set of guys is scarier: the former, who show some scruples but no brains; or the latter, who have the brains to equate force with rape, but who apparently possess no scruples.

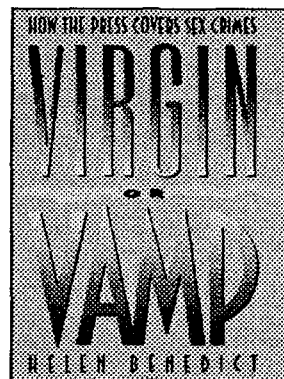
This gives a disturbing gloss to the feminist truism that rape is violence, not sex: some men can't tell the difference between the two. While the victim experiences rape as violence, at least some rapists experience violence as sex.

This is the point missing from Helen Benedict's otherwise excellent book, *Virgin or Vamp*. Benedict's meticulous study of four highly publicized cases—the Rideout "marital rape" case, the New Bedford pool table gang rape, the "Preppie Murder" of Jennifer Levin by Robert Chambers, and the attack on the "Central Park Jogger"—documents how the press shares the public impulse to blame the victim, to hold women responsible for male behavior.

In the Greta and John Rideout marital rape case, those reporters who had once been sympathetic to Greta's charge that her husband raped her lost all sympathy once a jury acquitted him and the couple briefly reconciled. How could she go back? The press, feeling conned, became vicious, speculating that Greta relished being raped, à la Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*. Disgusted, they turned their back on her.

Had they bothered to look, they would have seen her return to her husband as an act typical of battered women. Greta was broke and homeless, and responsible for the couple's small daughter. She'd been fired from her job during the trial, and evicted shortly afterward. John promised to reform, to get counseling and full-time work. She believed him—at least until he turned on her again, holding her prisoner for two days. Then she filed for divorce. John harassed and threatened her, tearing the chain lock off her door. She fled the state, and he finally spent time (though only 40 days) in jail.

In the case of Jennifer Levin, the press alleged that the strangled 18-year-old had "courted death" by hanging out with her friends in a familiar bar, enjoying sex with boys and coming on to Chambers, a former lover. Reporters implied that her lifestyle killed her, declining to scrutinize the life of Robert Chambers—the very model, it seemed, of young preppie manhood. In fact, Chambers was a coke addict and thief who'd been kicked out of three private schools.



Virgin or Vamp:
How the Press
Covers Sex Crimes
By Helen Benedict
Oxford University Press
309 pp., \$25

Unequal Verdicts:
The Central Park
Jogger Trials
By Timothy Sullivan
Simon and Schuster
335 pp., \$23

Chambers' lawyer took the victim-blaming argument one step further. Charging that Levin's death was the consequence of her own sexual aggression, he claimed that during a bout of "rough sex" the 120-pound Levin tied up the 220-pound Chambers in an attempt to rape him; she then squeezed his testicles, so shocking him that he wrenched an arm free and crushed her windpipe. Said his lawyer of Chambers' supposed misfortune: "The sad thing is, this could happen to anyone's kids."

In contrast to Rideout and Levin, "vamps" who allegedly provoked attack, some rapes do elicit media concern for the victims. But in many ways the "virgin" narrative is as misleading, and ultimately dehumanizing, as the "vamp" stereotype—a story of women, noble and pure, attacked by



subhuman “animals,” men so depraved they lose claim to being men. Not coincidentally, these cases often play on old racist stereotypes—the victims white women and the alleged attackers foreign, poor, and non-white men.

The “virgin” storyline ran through coverage of the New Bedford case, in which the press demonized all local Portuguese men, and through the attack on the Central Park jogger by a “wolf pack” of black teens. In both cases the community slandered by the media fought back—by attacking not the media but the victim. The New Bedford victim, herself of Portuguese descent, was effectively run out of town by the violent crowds that followed her home. The Central Park jogger was accused of going to the park to buy drugs, and the defense promised to make her sex life the central issue at trial. In both cases, community papers seemed to take vengeful pleasure in repeatedly printing the victims’ names.

Benedict does a superb job of placing the community response in context: she reminds us of the endless, appalling history of black men lynched for fabricated rapes of white women. It’s easier to understand the most extreme black reactions to the Central Park jogger case if one remembers the notorious frame-up, in the ’30s, of the “Scottsboro boys,” a group of black youths unjustly accused of raping two white women.

That sense of context is sorely lacking in *Unequal Verdicts*, Timothy Sullivan’s depressing account of the Central

Park jogger case. Sullivan tracks the various defendants and their disparate fates in order to cast light on the vagaries of the criminal justice system. But the Central Park jogger case is not the most edifying example of justice at work. The crime was so gory, the kids who confessed to it so coolly indifferent to the brutality they described, that the machinations of the courts seem trivial next to the question of the youths’ motivations. I want to know what makes these kids tick.

There’s much to suggest that the kids were royally railroaded: the high-pressure interrogation techniques resulting in stilted and suspect confessions; the joint trial that virtually guaranteed their guilt by association; their crappy defense lawyers. But it’s damn near impossible to care, because they still seem guilty as sin.

Yet Sullivan’s accumulated details can be compelling. There is an eerie parallel between the kids and the cops: both lie often and obviously, daring their listeners to disbelieve

them; both display a chilling arrogance and macho cool. Overall, I think the cops are probably more dangerous than the kids—they have the clout of the state behind their billy clubs. Unfortunately, this is just one of many issues Sullivan declines to explore.

Reading these two books together casts peculiar illumination on the events of the Central Park jogger case. The “virgin” storyline Benedict describes shapes the outlook of the police and prosecution, not just the press. Men are rarely prosecuted for rape when their victims fail to press charges. The Central Park victim, beaten into unconsciousness, couldn’t even swear she’d been raped, much less by whom. There’s strong evidence that she *was* raped—as Benedict points out, there were sticks and dirt in her vagina. But, as writer Judith Pasternak observes, if the race of the jogger and her attackers had been reversed, it’s extremely unlikely that this near murder would have been prosecuted as a sex crime.

Sullivan addresses the issue of racism in an oblique and cursory fashion, and he never deals with sexism at all. His plodding chronology of undigested facts adds little to the discourse on the difficult issues raised by the Central Park case. By contrast, Benedict moves us along to the day when a woman who is raped can be treated as a crime victim like any other, no longer virgin or vamp.

Phyllis Eckhaus is a disaffected lawyer and co-founder of the Brooklyn Anti-bias Response Network.

Continued from page 40

so-called mystical messiah about whom there is an enlightening 1957 biography by Gershom Scholem, the legendary exegete of Kabbala who taught at Hebrew University in Jerusalem until his death. The year 1666, crucial in the Zevi chronology, was supposed to be the moment when a divine hand from Heaven would descend to carry Jews to Israel.

Born in 1626 and dead at age 50, this apocryphal messiah visited Turkey, Palestine and Egypt and managed to persuade a large number of Polish Jews of his supernatural powers. Subsequently, he was excommunicated by the world's foremost rabbis because of his dubious teachings. His chief publicity agent, the self-declared prophet Nathan of Gaza, made his message accessible to an anxious, increasingly larger audience.

While Zevi was briefly imprisoned in Gallipoli for political activities, the movement expanded to the Middle East and Constantinople, but it came to a dead end when, immediately after

1666, the so-called messiah appeared before the Turkish sultan to save his neck by committing apostasy—he renounced his Judaism and embraced Islam. The effect was devastating: his constituency had a very difficult time understanding his unexpected conversion. Echoes of the movement survived until the late 18th century, when a number of successors still claimed Zevi's true religion to have been salvation through sin.

Although the similarities between Sabbatai Zevi and Menachem Mendel Schneerson are only superficial, the Lubavitchers run the risk of fracturing once again the already precarious religious unity of Jews around the globe. Like a crystal ball broken into infinite pieces, the gap between orthodoxy and reform, between dogmatic and progressive congregations, continues to divide and separate. And *Der Rebbe's* sect, often perceived as a reminder of a "total spiritual immersion" that only a limited number of Jews are ready to perform in today's world, might soon lose its dignified status.

Highlighted by Adolf Hitler and the Zionist movement, politics and the Holocaust have played a decisive role in reshaping the Jewish collective psyche. Judaism as a religion has been forced to respond and adapt itself to new challenges in our time. Approaching the end of the millenium, a new large-scale messianic movement can only have tragic consequences. Its impact will turn even more people away from faith and push Jews to yet more internal divisions. And although the diasporic journey of the Jewish people is a chain of ups and downs and no tragedy is ever final, the physical and spiritual suffering is likely to be immense. Consequently, the only antidote to the messiah of Crown Heights seems to be, paradoxically, God's silence. No divine news is good news. (Unless, of course, the end of History is near and Rabbi Schneerson is the savior.)

◀ **Ilan Stavans**, a Mexican novelist and critic, is the editor of the forthcoming *Tropical Synagogues*, an anthology of Jewish-Latin American stories due out in October from Holmes & Meier. He lives in Manhattan.

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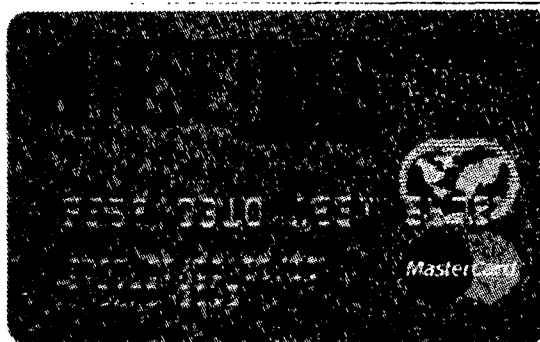
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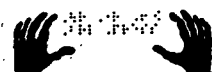
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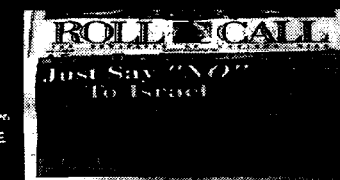
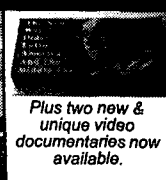
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Dear President Clinton... Real Peace & Real Justice



Jewish Committee On The Middle East

1 March 1993

President William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C.

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- Publicly recognize the right of the Palestinian people to equal independence and Statehood alongside Israel.
- Make it known to all governments in the region -- whether friend or foe -- that unlike in the past the U.S. will truly and consistently support democracy and human rights throughout the region, ending support for non-democratic regimes.
- Take steps to greatly reduce American economic dependence on both foreign oil purchases and military arms sales to and from the region.
- Make it clear to Israel, the largest recipient of U.S. aid and grants, that continuing occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people and continuing violations of international law will soon result in major cut-backs of U.S. support.
- Open forthright negotiations with the government of Iraq aiming for a comprehensive regional peace agreement.

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Sincerely,

Mark A. Bruzonsky, JCOME Chairperson
Former Washington Representative, World Jewish Congress

P.S. We are greatly dismayed you have allowed key persons associated with the Israeli lobby into sensitive White House and State Department positions. Doing so calls into question the very integrity of U.S. foreign policy. We implore you to seriously consider the recommendations we have outlined here and which we will elaborate upon in "Real Peace & Real Justice."

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ON THE END

Messianic times

By Ilan Stavans

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the 91-year-old religious leader of the Lubavitcher sect in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, has been proclaimed the messiah by many of his followers. After suffering a stroke in 1992 that left him partially paralyzed and almost completely mute, Schneerson has so far been unable either to embrace or fully disclaim the assertion. Whatever gesture he makes is interpreted as a sign of humility or as proof of his beyond-this-world sanctity.

The state of messianic alert couldn't be more evident among this branch of Hasidim totalling some 300,000, the majority of whom are based in New York and Jerusalem. Many believe the end of human History, with a capital "H," is near, which means not only that lambs and lions shall soon recline together but also, and more importantly, that every diaspora Jew will finally make it to Israel, the Promised Land, and not the politicized Zionist state born in 1948. (The Lubavitchers are strong antagonists of the Israeli government.)

In August 1991, while returning from a morning visit to his wife's grave, one of three cars in Rabbi Schneerson's motorcade spun out of control and struck and killed a black child named Gavin Cato. The incident ignited a huge riot in Crown Heights and badly damaged black-Jewish relations. Shortly after, the atmosphere of the neighborhood, dangerously volatile, triggered the vengeful killing of a young Australian yeshiva student, a member of the Lubavitcher sect. Prophetically enough, *Der Rebbe*, as the Jewish

leader is frequently referred to by his constituency, had predicted the imminent coming of the messiah a week before the fatal incident. According to rabbinical thinking, messianic times are preceded by a period of social upheaval. Thus, Rabbi Schneerson's prophecy helped convince many of his divine attributes.

In spite of his precarious health, *Der Rebbe*, who has no children, refuses to announce his immediate successor. At a televised town-hall meeting earlier this year—the Lubavitchers own a satellite channel that connects its members worldwide—his closest allies finally promised to anoint Rabbi Schneerson as the true savior. Which does not mean, if one turns to Maimonides, a 12th-century Spanish philosopher of Aristotelian persuasion and one of the highest authorities in legal and religious Judaism, that he *is* the messiah. According to Maimonides and to the Talmud, an ambitious exegetical work written in Babylon, the world does not cease to exist simply because every human generation has a redeemer whose true identity is unknown. And if at some point such identity is revealed to the people, the person can be proclaimed the savior by his followers. But unless God confirms the anointment, his supernatural powers will remain limited. In any event, the Lubavitcher TV celebration was cut short when *Der Rebbe* made a gesture interpreted as a "not yet" sign.

Not yet, but sooner than you think. Most Lubavitchers I have talked to believe Rabbi Schneerson is indeed the messiah. The redemptive craze in Crown Heights has even reached a hilarious dimension. Take the case of the so-called "messiah beeper." Many Lubavitcher males carry one 24 hours a day, even while asleep. The idea is to be in constant touch in case God unexpectedly sends a telegraphic message declaring Rabbi Schneerson the chosen one.

The elevation of a man to celestial status is of course nothing new among Jewish mystics. Beginning with Jesus Christ, who in the eyes of institutionalized Judaism was less a redeemer than a dividing political force who probably belonged to the Essene sect of the Dead Sea, a parade of impostors and false redeemers inundates Jewish history.

Perhaps the most famous (or infamous) is Sabbatai Zevi, the

Continued on page 36

